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PRICE ONE PENNY.



"OH! ERIC, I HAVE SO LONGED TO SEE YOU; THE DAYS HAVE SEEMED SO DREARY SINCE LAST WE MET."

HILDA'S FORTUNES.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

IDA, after a good deal of consideration, decided to keep to herself the discovery she had made in the boudoir, and the days following that afternoon were as dull and monotonous as they had been before. Gradually the conviction forced itself upon her that she could not run away from that sorrow which she had hoped to partly leave behind her at the Manor. Her love for Arthur, nourished in solitude and memories, grew into a passion even more absorbing than it had been before; and she wondered, in a vague sort of way, how she would ever get through the years that remained to her of life. Unlike Hilda, whose wide sympathies embraced all humanity, and whose greatest pleasure was in doing good for other people, she could not lose her own pain in an attempt to lessen that of her fellow-creatures; consequently, when trouble came, she had no means of forgetting it, and—what was almost as bad—no one to share it with.

Her father loved her very dearly, and if, by cutting off his right hand, he could have helped her in any way he would have done it; but since his wife's flight he had withdrawn into himself as a snail does into its shell, and had thus contrived to isolate himself, in a measure, from all outside sympathy. He had repeatedly told himself that he did not understand feminine nature, otherwise he would not have been so entirely deceived in his wife, and therefore he was the last person in the world to intrude himself on Ida in her love-sickness.

He watched her with a silent watchfulness that was quite pathetic; and each day, as he saw her grow paler and less like the Ida of old, he sighed helplessly, and almost felt in his heart as if he could have cursed the mother who had so heartlessly deserted her baby girl.

But it had not quite come to that. He had loved his wife so dearly, that, terrible as had been her crime, and heartless as was her conduct toward himself, there were yet moments when the remembrance of her came back as she was in the first happy months of their

marriage, when he and she had bent over the same books, and shared each other's pursuits, for she, too, had been a bookworm, and as dear a lover of study as himself.

One afternoon Ida was standing at the window of one of the salons, looking out on the raindrops as they chased each other down the glass panes.

It was a miserable January day, and although there was no fog the mist caused by the damp was almost equally unpleasant.

"I wonder what the use of life is?" she muttered miserably. "We just have a few years of happy childhood, and then trouble begins, and—as far as I can see—pursues us to our grave. I think Diogenes in his tub was best off, for at least he possessed [a] pre- scriptive right to rail against anybody or everybody, whereas, if we do it we are called discontented. Well, I don't mind confessing I am discontented—just as discontented as I can possibly be."

She remained gazing out at the rain for a few minutes, then the strangest sensation she had ever experienced took possession of her. A sort of inward force compelled her to turn

round, quite against the exercise of her own volition, and when she did so, she found herself face to face with Colonel Fanshawe, whose deep, intense, unfathomable eyes met hers with a smile.

"What—brings you here?" she blurted out, ignoring all politeness in her surprise.

"Business matters, Miss Ida, which I am afraid will also take me away again before long. How do you do?"

He held out his hand, into which she rather reluctantly put hers.

"Have you only just arrived?"

"I arrived about a quarter of an hour ago, had a few minutes' talk with my housekeeper, and hearing you were in here joined you."

"You must have come in very quietly. I did not know you were in the room."

"Did you not? I fancied, from the way you turned round, you expected to see me."

Ida looked at him rather uneasily, then, with her usual candour, she said,—

"I believe I expected to see something, but I had no idea it was you. I could not make out what induced me to turn round."

"Shall I tell you? It is a power called 'Odic Force,' for want of a better name."

"And pray what may 'Odic Force' consist of?"

"The influence of one person over another."

"Do you mean the conscious influence?"

"It may be conscious or unconscious. I will explain it to you sometime; at present I think I had better go and see your father. Will you come with me?"

"No," she responded, taking up some work, and seating herself near the stove, without raising her eyes to his.

He looked at her for a moment with a half smile on his lips, then turned and left the room. As he did so Ida drew a deep breath.

"What a strange thing that he should always affect me in this odd way!" she exclaimed aloud. "I don't like him, and yet he seems to compel me to look at him, whether I will or not. He reminds me of one of those magicians of old times, who practised the art of black magic, and got power for their pains; it served them very well right. 'Odic Force' indeed! I wonder what he means?"

Fanshawe found Sir Douglas in the library, and to him he gave the same explanation of his sudden appearance as he had already given to Ida.

"I hope you don't mind my arrival," he said, in conclusion. "I did not mean to intrude upon you, but necessity left me no choice."

"I am very glad to see you," exclaimed Sir Douglas, heartily; "and as for intruding, why you are in your own house, so that is sufficient answer to your remark. I wish you were going to stay longer than a day or two, for then perhaps you might rouse Ida from her low spirits. I remember you used to have excellent spirits yourself."

"Yes, and have still occasionally. *Apropos* of your daughter—she does not look well. Has she anything on her mind?"

"Yes," responded the Baronet, candidly, "some love affair, which was bound to end unhappily."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that under no possible circumstances could she have married the young man."

Colonel Fanshawe looked thoughtful. As a matter of fact he guessed the truth, but it did not suit his policy to say so.

"And yet, St. John, it would be a good thing if she were married. All girls are better married," he remarked.

"I suppose they are, and I should be very glad to know that Ida was married to a good man who would love her, and care for her as she deserves, after I am gone—the man who would not squander her money."

"Let me see. Do your estates go with the title?" inquired Fanshawe, curiously.

"No, they are mine to dispose of as I like, and, naturally, I have left them to Ida?"

"Indeed! Then she is an heiress?"

"I suppose the world calls her so. On her marriage day I shall execute a deed of settlement, whereby she will have the interest of a hundred thousand pounds, and at my death, all I have will go to her and her children."

"Then you must look out for a rich husband for her."

"By no means. She will have enough for both, so if she gets a good man, I do not care whether he has money or not."

That night, at dinner, Colonel Fanshawe exerted his conversational talents to such good purpose that Ida was bound to confess his presence made a very great improvement to their usually silent repast. He was a clever man, with a certain vein of cynical humour that made him an amusing companion. He had travelled much, and had made the best of his time in studying men and manners. His code of morality was not a high one, certainly, but this fact he did not obtrude on Ida and Sir Douglas.

The next morning he came to Miss St. John as she was labouring patiently at her embroidery.

"I am going to drive you out, if I may," he said, in the assured tone of one who does not anticipate a refusal. "I have a dogcart, and as it is rather high, it will give you a good chance of seeing the country."

Ida's first impulse was to decline, and she looked up with the intention of saying "no," but the negative died on her lips, and to her own surprise she went quietly from the room in order to put on her things.

After all, she was glad she had gone, for the drive was a pleasant one. The country was not particularly beautiful, but Colonel Fanshawe knew all the various landmarks, and interested his companion by his light chit-chat concerning the different places they passed.

"I want to ask you a question, Colonel Fanshawe," she said, abruptly, when they were driving home.

"I shall be delighted to answer as many questions as you like, Miss St. John."

"What brought my mother's signature in one of your blotting-books?"

She was looking straight in his face as she said the words, and she saw that he suddenly blanched and drew back, as if a glaring light had been flashed in his eyes. It was but momentary, however; then he said, with an expression of astonishment,—

"I do not understand you, Miss St. John. I was not aware that your mother's signature was in my house."

"I will explain. A few days ago I happened to enter a small sitting-room in the chateau that, I believe, is generally kept locked, and there I found a sheet of blotting-paper with the name of 'Idalia St. John' written upon it. Now, neither 'Idalia' or 'St. John' is a common name, and therefore I came to the conclusion that the writer of the signature must have been my mistress."

"Your idea is correct, although I never knew till this moment that the signature was there. I once stayed at the Manor House—when you were a baby—and admired a blotting-case that I saw in your mother's boudoir, upon which she made me a present of it, and the one you saw is the same. I suppose she must have used it before she gave it to me."

The explanation was given with perfect frankness, while the speaker's eyes looked candidly back into hers; and yet, for all that, Ida doubted whether it was a true one. She had no grounds for her doubt, and could have given no reason for it had she been pressed.

"The room you entered was mine. I fitted up for my sister," he went on, in a lower tone, while a shadow fell on his face, "but she died a few weeks after she came to live with me, and I have had it shut up ever since. This morning I gave orders that

it should be opened, in order that I might place it at your service."

"You are very good," said Ida; "but really the order was quite unnecessary. There are plenty of rooms in the chateau without that one."

"Yes, but that is the prettiest and pleasantest, and you will greatly oblige me by making use of it. There is really no reason why it should be closed any longer, since the bitterness of my sister's death has now become softened by time—the great Physician, who heals all things."

After this Ida felt that a refusal would be ungracious, so when she returned to the chateau, and found that her work-basket, writing materials, &c., had been removed into the boudoir, she took possession of it as her own sitting-room—not without noticing that the red mark on the carpet, which had produced such a sinister impression on her, had been covered with a bearskin rug.

The business upon which Colonel Fanshawe had come detained him at the chateau much longer than he had expected, and at the end of a fortnight he was still there. Each day he and Ida saw a good deal of each other; for when it was fine they drove out together, and when was he would read to her while she worked in the boudoir. He read very well, his voice was full and deep and musical, and he was well acquainted with the poets and the lighter portraiture of English literature. Altogether he was an extremely pleasant man for a companion, and sometimes Ida felt herself completely swayed by the fascination of his manner; at others she inwardly rebelled against it, and would not allow herself to be pleased, even while she confirmed her own inconsistency.

"Colonel Fanshawe," she said to him one afternoon, when he had been reading 'Lara' to her, "do you believe in spiritualism?"

"No," he answered, gravely, "I do not. What made you ask?"

"I was thinking of what you said to me the other day about 'Odic Force,' and I thought it must have something to do with spiritualism." He laughed merrily.

"They are quite distinct, and—in my opinion at least—bear no relation to each other. If you had chosen Odic Force with mesmerism you would have been nearer the mark."

"Are they the same?"

"By no means, but they bear upon each other. Have you ever been mesmerised?"

"No."

"Should you like to be?"

"Are you a mesmerist?" she asked, answering his question by another.

"I should not call myself one, but if you like I will try my powers on you."

"I do not like; nothing would induce me to submit to the attempt."

"You are afraid!" he exclaimed, with a contempt in his voice that piqued her, as he had intended it should.

"Indeed I am not; what is there to be afraid of?"

"What, indeed! nevertheless, you certainly are not brave enough to risk a nerve experience."

"Because I know that it is all rubbish."

"How do you know that?"

"I have heard so."

"Hearay is not very reliable evidence, you must admit."

"It is sufficient for me in this instance."

"Besides," he added, "if you are sure it is all rubbish you need not fear a trial of my powers."

"Your arguments may be forcible, but they don't convince me," she answered.

"I did not suppose for a moment they would have that effect, Miss St. John. I know the feminine nature too well to believe it can be convinced where it does not wish to be."

"You are cynical, Colonel Fanshawe."

"I don't think so; at all events, I only state a fact which is patent to all the world."

Two or three times afterwards the subject of mesmerism was broached, but Ida did not waver in her refusal—or rather, it would be more correct to say, she persevered in it; for, to her own surprise, she found herself more than once on the point of yielding to this officer's request that she should be mesmerised, and the discovery of this vacillation not only perplexed but alarmed her.

She attempted to analyse her feelings one day.

"I have said I won't be mesmerised and I don't want to be," she said to herself; "and yet, in spite of this, I feel, when I am in Colonel Fanshawe's presence, unanswerable desire to comply with his wishes. What is the meaning of it? Is he already beginning to acquire an influence over me?"

Her mind was clear, logical, and unimaginative, and she was quite capable of withstanding persuasion, and holding her own both in argument and action. Nevertheless, she was fain to confess that Fanshawe had actually established some sort of power over her, and it was of so subtle a nature that there was nothing tangible to fight against.

As the days went on this impression strengthened, and at last she grew to feel as if she were imprisoned by the tiniest, finest, most impalpable ligaments, which held her down in every part; and, for all their delicacy, were unbreakable. She chafed against the feeling, told herself it was all nonsense, and that she was letting fancy run away with her; but all the arguments in the world would not unfasten those impalpable bonds.

"How is it you seem to exercise some sort of domination over me?" she asked him, restlessly, one afternoon.

The pupils of his black eyes seemed to dilate at the question. He came a little nearer, and stood opposite her—so close that she could see he was breathing quickly and excitedly.

"The reason is a very simple one," he answered; "and if you wish to hear it I will tell it you."

"I do wish to hear it."

"Now?"

"Now—at once."

"Then the explanation is very simple. Just this—I love you."

Ida looked at him as if petrified with astonishment, but the strange part of it was she was really not at all surprised, for the declaration seemed to her somehow like the repetition of something that had gone before. For about a minute she stared straight into his face, then her eyes fell under the steady intentness of his gaze.

"I love you, Ida," he repeated, in low, deep tones, that might have been indicative of earnest feeling. "What have you to say to me?"

"What have I to say to you?" she exclaimed, passionately, as she partly recovered her self-possession. I have to ask you how you dare insult me in such a manner?"

She was trembling with suppressed rage, which thrilled in her voice, and sparkled in the stormy depths of her dark eyes, as she moved a few paces back from him, her small hands clenched together so tightly that the nails cut into the flesh. Why she should have been so angry she could not have told, for her displeasure would assuredly not have been provoked on ordinary occasions by the fact of a man telling her he loved her.

"Insulting you is the very last thing I should think of doing," he responded, gravely. "No man insults a woman by his love, and he honours her of whom he asks the boon that I now crave at your hands. I offer myself to you as your husband, and ask you to be my wife. Will you accept me?"

"No—no; a hundred times no!"

He did not seem in the least put out by this emphatic refusal.

"You do not care for me at present? Well, I am content to wait until you give me a different answer."

"If you waited twenty years my answer would be the same."

"I should not wait twenty years—the game would not be worth the candle then, and you yourself would not be so well worth the winning," he returned, cynically. "I am willing to wait a month, and then I feel sure of success."

"You are leaning on a rotten reed, Colonel Fanshawe. In a month's time you and I will be separated by a good many miles. I venture to hope."

"I think not," composedly. "Probably you will want to leave the chateau, as you are afraid if you remain with me your resolution will evaporate, and you will accede to my wishes; but where you go I follow, so flight is absolutely useless as a means of getting rid of me."

To leave the chateau at once had been Ida's first idea, and she immediately sought her father with a view of suggesting it to him; but her intention had to be postponed, for Sir Douglas was suffering from a somewhat severe bilious attack, and in no state of mind capable of receiving his daughter's communication.

Ida went away from the library feeling baffled.

CHAPTER XXV.

For once Lady Hawksley was taken off her guard, and as she saw Eric before her, her hands fell helplessly to her side, and from them dropped a curious little child's frock—the plaid frock that Verrall had brought with him from Lexington.

"You do me great honour by the interest you take in me, Lady Hawksley," said the young officer, making her an ironical bow. "If you had mentioned the fact of your wishing to make an investigation of my trunks I might have gratified your curiosity without putting you to the inconvenience of a stolen visit."

She glared at him with unconcealed hatred in her eyes, and as he met her glance, and then saw it drop to the frock he still held in his hand, a sudden idea struck him.

"Now that I have the opportunity, allow me to ask you a question, Lady Hawksley; but first of all, permit me to offer you a chair," he said, politely drawing one forward.

"Do you know what you are saying, sir?" she demanded, haughtily, and recovering her self-control, while she took a step towards the door. "Ladies, as a rule, do not seat themselves in the apartments of their guests."

"Ladies, as a rule, do not steal into their guests' apartments during the absence of the occupier, and attempt to take away his property," he retorted, quickly. "You must have had a very powerful motive for desiring to obtain possession of that little frock, or you would not have run such a risk."

Her face turned of a sickly yellow colour, but she did not speak.

"Had it anything to do with your wish to get me out of England?" he went on, speaking more on the impulse of the moment than from premeditation. "What is the origin of your interest in me, Lady Hawksley?"

Still no reply.

"It is not love—that I am assured, so the only conclusion I can come to is that it must be hate."

An evil gleam came in her eyes, and made her look more like a witch than ever.

"I have nothing to do with you and your conclusions, Captain Verrall," she said, harshly. "I came in here for the purpose of cutting a piece of damask off the bed-hangings in order to match it when I go to W—tomorrow, and my eye happened to fall on that frock; so I took it up to examine it. That is all that brought me here."

Verrall could not refrain from laughing.

"Really, Lady Hawksley, you do not do yourself justice in such a lame excuse!" he exclaimed. "You are too clever to imagine it would deceive me; why, therefore, should you take the trouble to utter it?"

"Because it is the truth," defiantly.

"Oh, if you like to have an argument, I don't object. In the first place, why—supposing your excuse to be valid—should you have locked the door?"

"I did not lock it."

Eric paused a moment to think, then exclaimed,

"No, by Jove, you did not lock it, for I had the key in my pocket all the time! The question is, how did you get in?"

"You ask it in the tone of a riddle; well, you shall guess the answer yourself," she returned, with a malevolent smile. "Now let me go out."

He stood aside for her to pass, and after she had departed, thoughtfully considered this new phase in his history, which was indeed sufficient to puzzle him.

It was quite clear that the Dowager took a more than common interest in him, and that interest had for its origin some stronger motive than jealousy of his friendship with Arthur. It seemed to him that it must be, in some way, connected with the secret of his birth, otherwise she would not have fixed on that little plaid frock, which was the only clue in his possession towards solving the mystery. The more Verrall pondered, the more puzzled he became, although, at the same time, the more convinced of Lady Hawksley's knowledge of his antecedents; and at last he decided to go to London, and consult a man he knew there, who might possibly be in a position to help him.

The idea struck him that possibly he might be the son of some connection of the Dowager's—or of her own son's, if she had ever had one. He could not pursue his investigations in Lord Westlyn's house, for it savoured too much of an ungrateful return for the Earl's hospitality, and therefore he resolved to bring his visit to an immediate conclusion.

He informed Arthur of his decision that evening, and although he said nothing of the motives that actuated him, the Viscount did not attempt to combat his resolution. Lord Westlyn, on the contrary, was very anxious that he should prolong his visit.

"You are more than welcome here," the Earl said, as he pressed his hand; "not only as Arthur's friend, but as my own."

"You are very good," murmured the young officer, touched at the nobleman's kindness.

Lord Westlyn drew him on one side, and out of earshot of the Viscount.

"If ever you should be in any pecuniary difficulty—and I know such difficulties are not uncommon to young men—apply to me without hesitation," he said. "I know you will not be offended with me for saying this, for you must be aware that I take a most sincere—I might almost say, *fatherly* interest in you, and I should be only too glad to have a means of proving it. Are you in want of money at present?"

"No," responded Eric, flushing; "but I am just as grateful to you as if I were, and you had given it me. I take your kind offer as it is meant, and sometimes I may avail myself of it."

"I hope you will. Always remember that you are to look on Dering Court as your home. I am very sorry you are leaving it so soon."

The next morning Eric packed his luggage, and in the afternoon went over to the Castle, in order to wish Hilda good-bye. He had some qualms as to whether he was justified in thus outraging conventionalities; but he could not resist the temptation of seeing her once again; and, besides, he argued, she herself had declared she hated etiquette, therefore she would surely forgive him for offending against it.

Arrived at the Castle, he asked for Miss Fitzherbert, and was shown into the smallest of the suite of reception rooms, where he was kept waiting for about ten minutes, during which time he schooled himself to greet Hilda with only that amount of friendly warmth which their acquaintance warranted.

And yet even the thought of her presence had power to send the blood coursing through

his veins at double its ordinary speed. As the door gently unclosed he felt his face flushing, and it was with a feeling of bitter disappointment that he saw Evelyn Monkton on the threshold.

She advanced, at first swiftly, then she stopped, and a curious, half timid look came in her eyes. Eric was quick to observe some subtle change in her manner, for which he could not account.

He shook hands with her, and felt slightly embarrassed as she let her hand remain in his.

"I thought you would come to-day," she murmured, in tones that were caressingly low.

"Did you?" he returned, a little vaguely.

"And I also fancied you would ask for Hilda instead of me," she went on, rather archly, "so I told the hall-porter that if you came he was to ring the bell for my maid, who would inform me at once. Was not that clever of me?"

"Very," answered Eric, growing more and more puzzled at her demeanour.

"As it happened, my maid was in the hall when you came, so she brought the message straight to me, consequently Hilda does not know you are here."

"The devil she doesn't!" was Eric's inward exclamation, which he felt a very great temptation to utter aloud.

"So there is no danger of our being intruded upon," Evelyn continued, with a coquettish glance into his eyes; then she came a step nearer, and laid her hand on his shoulder. "Oh! Eric—I have so longed to see you; the days have seemed so very, very dreary since last we met!"

At this moment the door opened, and Hilda herself was on the point of entering, but no sooner had she seen the tableau presented by the young officer, with Evelyn lying across his breast, than she closed the door, and swiftly retreated before either of them became aware of her presence.

A more awkward situation than that of Verrall it would be impossible to imagine. For a young man, when a young woman throws herself unasked into his arms, to throw her off again, is, to say the least, difficult, but for him to stand still and continue to support her without saying a word, is to reduce the position to the ludicrous.

"Miss Monkton!" he began, but she stopped him with a glance of reproach.

"Miss Monkton—from you! Surely, when we are alone, you can call me Evelyn!"

"You are very good to give me the permission, but I think, perhaps, if anyone heard me call you by your Christian name, they might misconstrue our relative positions," he rejoined, a little stiffly.

Evelyn raised her head, and coloured.

"No one need hear you call me so. I fully appreciate your desire for secrecy, but surely when we are alone it is different."

Verrall did not reply, for the simple reason that he could find nothing to say, and a pause of embarrassed silence ensued.

"Is there any reason why the veil should not be dropped in private?" she went on, looking up at him with her dark, passionate eyes. "Oh! Eric, surely it is bad enough not to be able to claim you before the world, without observing the same restraint when I have you to myself!"

Eric was now seriously embarrassed, not to say alarmed. It was clear there was some misapprehension, and the sooner it was removed the better for both parties.

"I am afraid, Miss Monkton, there is a mistake—I don't quite understand—" he began, and then came to a pause. His experience had never furnished him with a parallel case, and he really did not know what to say.

All men have a dread of making fools of themselves, and our hero was no exception to the rule.

"You don't understand?" repeated Evelyn, rather bitterly, as she withdrew herself; "no, I don't think you do. Men are all alike; they

think they have a right to exact everything, and give nothing in return. I wonder if any man in the world was ever worthy of a woman's love?"

"That is a wide question," observed Verrall, beginning to see the drift of the scene.

"Yes, it is a wide question, but it is capable of being reduced to narrow limits—to our own case, for example."

"I don't see that our own case has any bearing whatever upon the point."

"How different you are to what you were the night of the ball!" exclaimed Evelyn, upon whom, not even yet, had the truth dawned. "Have you grown tired of me already?"

"Tired of you! I do not in the least understand what you mean. Will you be good enough to explain?"

"Explain—what?" she demanded, passionately. "Do you wish me to go over the interview that took place between us on the night of the Officers' Ball, when you told me you loved me, and—"

"Stop!" he exclaimed, authoritatively. "I fancied there was some great error somewhere, and now I am sure of it. I cannot express my regret, Miss Monkton, that I should have spoken ambiguously enough to deceive you, but I had not the slightest idea of telling you I loved you; indeed, my impression was that you had surprised my secret, and that in confessing the truth I was saying no more than you already knew."

"What!" she cried hoarsely. "You do not love me?"

Such a question is a very difficult one for a man to answer, especially when it comes from the lips of a very pretty woman. Verrall wished the ceiling would come down, or the floor would sink in, or something would happen to get him out of this very awkward dilemma.

Evelyn, however, had no idea of allowing herself to be deceived a second time, and finding he did not answer, she said,—

"I demand a reply as a right, Captain Verrall. You told me the other night you were in love?"

"Yes," he returned, in a low voice.

"And you led me to understand it was with me?"

"Pardon me, Miss Monkton, but I did not intend to mislead you in that way."

"Then whom do you love, if not me?"

"Your cousin, Hilda."

The answer had a magical effect on Evelyn. For a moment she stood as if petrified, then she threw up her arms with a wild gesture of despair, and sank down on a couch that happened to be near, burying her face in the cushions, and overwhelmed with the violence of her emotion.

A thousand thoughts of vengeance flashed with the rapidity of lightning through her brain. She was wounded in her very tenderest part, and as long as she lived she would bear the scar of the wound. If she had had a pistol in her hand at that moment Verrall's life would have paid the penalty of his indiscretion.

She had deceived herself—she had dwelt for a few days in a fool's paradise, and now the awakening had come. Verrall loved—not her, but her cousin Hilda!

A deadly hatred grew up in her heart toward her cousin—the girl who was favoured above her in all things—who was richer, more beautiful, younger, and sweeter, and who had won the love of the man who filled her own heart.

Presently, becoming aware of the humiliation of her position, she rose to her feet, and steadied herself by leaning on the arm of the couch. Of the two she was certainly the more self-possessed.

"Perhaps, under the circumstances, we had better put an end to this interview, Captain Verrall," she said, icily, "unless, indeed, you want to see my cousin now, in which case I will have her informed of your presence."

Eric felt that to have declared his desire to

see Hilda at the present moment would be, on his part, nothing more nor less than an act of brutality. Blameless as he was in the matter, Evelyn had contrived to put him in a false position, and make him feel that his carelessness had caused her a great deal of unnecessary pain.

"I will defer seeing Miss Fitzherbert until some future occasion," he said, taking up his hat. "Will you allow me to express my very sincere regret—"

She interrupted him by waving her hand.

"I will take your regrets for granted, Captain Verrall, without troubling you to repeat them."

"At least, Miss Monkton, you will shake hands with me?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," she responded, after a moment's hesitation, and then he bowed and was gone.

A more humiliating position for a proud woman to be in it would be impossible to imagine. She had shown Verrall that she cared for him; she had even offered him her caresses, and they had been repulsed. In a word, she was at his mercy.

Her knowledge of his character assured her that so far as he was concerned she was safe, for nothing would ever induce him to betray her indiscretion; nevertheless, the bitterness lay in his knowing it. She was, for the moment, careless of the opinion of the rest of the world.

"He loves Hilda, and she loves him," she muttered to herself. "By-and-by they will marry; and he, finding himself master of the Castle, will laugh at the presumption of the penniless girl who ventured to care for him, and whose love he rejected. Shall I let him do this? Shall I—shall I?"

A very tempest of passion ran riot within her. Two demons stood at her side, Revenge and Vanity, urging her with all their power to do evil, and wreck other lives as her own had been wrecked. She clenched her hands together, and her eyes absolutely blazed in the fierceness of their light, as she stood listening to the subtle whisper of the tempter at her elbow, while visions of vengeance presented themselves to her mind's eye, as in a series of pictures.

Would the good that was in her be strong enough to withstand the temptation, or would she yield herself to the domination of her passions?

Time must show.

(To be continued.)

A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER.—Our winters are certainly getting milder. It was nothing strange years ago for snow to fall about Christmas and remain on the ground for weeks and months, often several feet in depth. The mercury dropped below zero and did not cause any wonder. Everything that usually ran on wheels was placed on "runners." It is very seldom that the mercury now falls below zero, and snow rarely packs, even when it is not cleared away by the street-cleaning department. "One principal cause for this change," said a New York officer of the Signal Service Corps, "can be seen from the windows of this station. Look around you in every direction, east, west, north or south, in this city, Brooklyn and Jersey City, and what do you see? Clouds of steam rising from nearly every house-top. Elevators in offices and apartment houses, factories using steam as a motor, buildings heated by the same hot vapour; all sending forth clouds from the tops of the houses. Do you not suppose this has an effect on the atmosphere, warms the air and half melts the snow before it reaches the ground? Then there are the boilers under the sidewalks and in the cellars; steam heating pipes along the roadways and thousands of contrivances to generate heat not known a quarter of a century ago.—*American Paper*.

SEA MOSS.

SEA MOSS is more or less valuable all over the world. In Ireland the poorer classes depend greatly upon the Carrageen moss, and some live upon it for months in each year. It is imported in large quantities, and used as blanc mange and in various ways. The Scotch have their dulse, and in the Hebrides the tangle is eaten. In South America the natives eat the moss that is known as D'Urvillea utilis. It is a giant of its kind, sometimes attains a length of several hundred feet, and is so stout that a small vessel could anchor by one. One found off the coast of Chili was so heavy that it took sixty men to drag it ashore. It grows in the breakers, and rolling about appears like huge snakes, and often upsets boats that become entangled in it. Larger still is the great weed Macrocytis pyrifera, that attains a length of six hundred and fifty feet or more. It also grows in the breakers, and is of great importance to some coasts, as, were it not for its protection, the sea would beat so furiously that no fishes would go in shore, and so the inhabitants would be deprived of means of support. This is especially true of the South Patagonian coast, and so important that Darwin considers it that he once wrote "Amid the leaves of this plant numerous species of fish live, which nowhere else could find food or shelter. With their destruction the many cormorants and other fishing birds, the otters, seals and porpoises would soon perish also; and lastly, the Fuegian savage—the miserable lord of this miserable land—would redouble his feast, decrease in numbers, and perhaps cease to exist."

The seaweed collector of New England uses kelp to keep him warm, and in various parts of Europe it is used as a medicine, a greater part of the iodine of trade being made from it. Formerly the alkali soda used in the manufacture of soap, glass, and various articles was derived from kelp, but it is now made from other sources. In France the kelp is placed in great furnaces and dried, finally fusing into a solid mass that is known as varec, and in Spain as barrilla. About twenty-four tons of weed produce a single ton of varec, that is shipped to manufacturers in the bulk, and finally used in the manufacture of iodine.

WHEN you see an action in itself noble, to suspect the soundness of its motive is like supposing every high thing, mountains among the rest, to be hollow. Yet how many pride themselves on this uncharitable folly! These are your silly vulgar-wise, your shallow men of penetration, who measure all things by their own littleness, and who, by professing justly to know nature exclusively. Let none such be trusted in their judgments upon any one—not even on themselves always.

MIDGETS.—Midgets have excellent appetites, as a rule. Tom Thumb ate more than Chang, the Chinese giant. Any of the little folk will eat as much dinner as a man six feet high. Giants, as a rule, have small appetites. When we boarded Chang at one of the large hotels they thought he would eat a good deal, and so they charged him as much as if he were three men. Instead of going through the bill of fare from beginning to end and then repeating, he ate no more than the average boarder. It took three beds, however, to make one bed for him to sleep in. A very grotesque-looking South American dwarf, who used to be exhibited as a wild man without language, who fed on raw meat and who was incapable even of understanding signs, would, after the exhibition was through every night, go over to a restaurant and order all the French dishes on the bill of fare, read a Spanish newspaper, talk French to the waiters, and ask questions in fluent English. He had an enormous appetite. He didn't weigh much, but he ate like an elephant. He used to polish off three apple-dumplings for dessert.

LOVE'S SUMMER-TIME.

SWEET were the beautiful days of yore,
Tranquil days of the summer-time,
When we two wandered the meadows o'er,
And youth and summer were in their prime.

Violets blossomed beneath our feet,
Sweet-marjoram and daisy-bloom;
Cowslip and yarrow and meadow-sweet
Filled the air with a faint perfume.

Gleaming bright in the emerald grass
Were dandelions like fallen stars;
You remember, ere I would let you pass,
I took my toll at the pasture bars.

You were as sweet as a rose that day,
Sweet as a rose and blithe as a bird;
Half in earnest and half in play—
Well I remember each merry word.

You filled my heart with doubt and pain;
I felt you never could earnest be;
And then you gave me a hope again,
And I dared to think you might love me.

You answered me neither "Yes" nor "No";
You led me a merry dance that day;
Though, laughing, your red lips bade me go,
Your eyes and your blushes bade me stay.

And so I lingered by your side
Until above us gleamed the stars.
And then you promised to be my bride
As I took my toll again at the bars.

Then I took more kisses than you allowed
I will confess, though I don't regret
As into my heart those memories crowd,
And the thrill of those kisses lingers yet.

Sweet were those beautiful days of yore—
The happy days when I courted you;
But though the summer and bloom are o'er,
The love in my heart is still as true.

And though the winds of the winter blow,
And Time has silvered your hair so bright,
Never in all our lives, I know
Was love more sweet than it is to-night.

A. K.

BUT NOT OUR HEARTS.

—o—

CHAPTER XI.

A few days later Mr. Spragg rode over to the Rest on Bluebell, followed by a dapper groom on a powerful roan, to give his invitation in person.

Mr. Vane expected the visit, and Ruby had orders to hold herself in readiness, and to have shock-headed Jenny in a presentable and Christian-like condition. The result was that the great man escaped being shocked by seeing many evidences of extreme poverty. Rugs had been brought from the library and laid down in the drawing-room, the bowls filled with fragrant flowers, fresh curtains put up, and a general clean given; so the place wore quite a respectable aspect, as Spragg stalked in, his riding-trousers tightly strapped down over his shiny boots, and his coat hanging, as usual, in loose and unsightly folds from the nape of his neck.

"What a ghoul!" thought Ruby, as she advanced to meet him, holding some elegant trifle of fancy-work in her slender fingers, for she had orders from her father to entertain him until he had slipped out of the old dressing-gown and slippers into his one sole and only coat, and pair of decent boots.

"Glad to find you at home this time, Miss Ruby?" he said, grasping her hand with a smile that disclosed the whole of his wolf-like fangs to view.

"Yes. We were sorry to miss seeing you the other day."

"The loss was mine," with another grin.

"And ours too. We wanted to hear how you like Temple Dene, and if you will find it attractive enough to remain in the county."

"I like the place immensely, and I guess," he continued slowly, as if revolving something in his own mind, "that I shall find more attraction in and about this spot than I possibly could in any other place in the whole world."

"That is flattering to Dene," she replied, understanding, yet not appearing to understand, what he meant.

"Or its inhabitants?" he returned pointedly. "Is your sister in?" he asked the next moment.

"No. She has taken Billie and Turk for a walk."

"Billie and Turk!" he repeated, inquiringly, while his face fell considerably.

"Yes; My younger, or rather smallest, brother, and the mastiff."

"I suppose he is the pet, your brother I mean, bein' a little fellow?"

"Yes, decidedly with Opal. He is her favourite."

And Spragg made a mental note of that, for use at some future period, when he might want to conciliate Miss Vane.

"And who is your father's?"

"I hardly know," she answered with some embarrassment. "I think he liked us all equally, as he has never shown a preference."

"The fairest thing to do."

"I suppose so. But generally parents have a favourite, and—"

"Ah! delighted to see you," interrupted Vane, entering at that moment, having shed his workhouse-like attire, as the snake sheds his skin; and shaking Spragg warmly by the hand. "Very good of you to come."

"Not at all. I wanted to give my invitation personally."

"Ah! yes. How are the preparations for the fête going on? Satisfactorily?"

"Yes; I think so—as far as I judge. But I want you to come over and dine with me this evenin' if you can, and help me in arrangeth a few details?"

"Thanks. Most happy to do so, if my children can spare me," rejoined the archhypocrite, glancing at the Duchess, who played up to his lead, and said with a smile, "We must, I suppose, for once in a way."

"That is settled, then?"

"Yes."

"I shall expect you at seven."

"Very well, I shall be punctual. What day have you arranged for the fête?"

"Wednesday week. They told me Wednesday is a half-holiday, and that the schoolchildren would be able to come."

"Yes, of course, the best day."

"Have you mentioned it to your daughters?"

"No. I left that for you to do."

"Well, Miss Ruby. I hope you and—"

"Fardon me," interrupted Vane, laying one of his delicate white hands on the American's arm, "I see my eldest girl coming up through the garden. Will you wait a moment, and give the invitation to her as well?"

"Certainly," returned Spragg with alacrity, wheeling round so that he also could see the white-clad figure coming slowly between the flower-beds, the great dog walking at her side, and the child bounding on in front, his hat, which he seemed to object to wear on his head, except when absolutely necessary, in his hand, and his golden curls blown into a tangled shimmering mass about his face, flushed to a brilliant but hectic bloom,

"Call your sister," ordered Vane, briefly.

"Opal, come here!" called Ruby, standing in the window.

"And me too?" asked Billie.

"Yes," she nodded, and he jumped into the room with a glad shout of, "Look, look, what I have got. Won't we have a fine t—"

But the last words froze on his lips as he caught sight of his father, and saw the cruel eyes fixed on his face, and in his dismay and agitation almost dropped the hat he was carrying.

"What have you there?"

"B—b—black—berries," he stammered, turning very white.

"Extremely nice things. Put them on the table, and then go and shake hands with that gentleman, if your hands are in a fit condition to be offered."

"They're—not—very clean," he faltered, after setting down his basket of fruit, holding out a tiny pair of grimy paws.

"Never mind, my little man," cried Spragg cheerily, seeing that the child was nervous and somewhat frightened. "Come and give me a kiss," and just as Opal stepped through the long French window she saw the mummy's lipless mouth pressed to Billie's soft cheek, and his dark wrinkled face close to the child's blooming visage.

"Mr. Spragg, my dear," explained Vane, in a most urbane manner.

"Have you had a pleasant walk?" inquired the visitor, as he rose to greet her.

"Yes, thank you," she answered, wrenching her eyes from the countenance that fascinated her, and studying the faded daisies on the carpet.

"Nice day for a stretch across the levels," he continued, playing with Billie's golden curls, and thinking how like his eyes were to his sister's azure orbs.

"Yes."

"Mr. Spragg has brought an invitation," announced Mr. Vane, a slight frown on his brow at her listless and uninterested manner.

"Indeed! For you?"

"No; for you and your sister."

"Yes. I hope you young ladies will honour me with your presence, on Wednesday week, at a fete and sort of house warmin' I am goin' to give to friends, tenantry, and villagers."

"Thank you very much," she began, without the slightest hesitation, "but we seldom go to entertainments of any sort, and therefore——"

"And therefore will have much pleasure in accepting Mr. Spragg's," broke in her father, with a bland smile to his guest, and a menacing glance at her, which stopped the refusal she was about to utter, and filled her with a vague uneasiness.

"I shall be so pleased if you will," almost implored the American.

"If my father wishes it, of course we shall do so," she replied, after a perceptible hesitation, for she dared not rebel openly against the iron hand in the velvet glove, that ruled then all with cruel, and unbending sternness.

"Thanks. Then I shall count on your comin', and bringin' this little fellow as well," indicating Billie by a wave of the hand, "if he cares to come."

"I should like to, awfully," murmured the child, visions of jam tarts, whipped cream, apples, pears, peaches, cakes, merry-go-rounds, swings, cricket, Punch and Judy shows, floating before his mind's eye in a bewildering medley.

"Then you shall, if your papa gives permission," smiled Spragg, looking down at the fair upturned face, and feeling an insane desire to cover it with kisses, because it was so like that other one, which he could only admire from a respectful distance.

"Oh, certainly. I have no objection to his going if he won't be in the way."

"Not at all. I hope to see many small guests, as well as big ones."

"Children, especially boys, enjoy open-air parties so much," put in Ruby, thinking the others might as well have a chance too, of participating in the gaiety that was going on.

"Yes, yes," agreed the mummy, taking the hint. "Your other brothers must come also."

"No, really!" protested their amiable parent, "that would be too many. We are a large party without them."

"That does not matter. The whole thing will be on a large scale. Half-a-dozen, more or less, or indeed fifty, would make next to no difference. So I shall hope to see you all."

"I am sure my young people will enjoy it greatly if they won't be in the way."

"In the way? Not at all. I shall be sincerely glad to see them," rejoined the other

warmly, as he rose to depart, feeling that he had no tangible excuse for staying longer.

Copeland Vane watched him closely as he bade adieu to the girls, but he made nothing of it, for he was equally polite to both, and, if anything, held Ruby's hand an instant longer than he did Opal's.

"Father, what made you accept this invitation for us?" exclaimed the latter, as he returned from escorting his guest to the gate.

"Because I wish you to go to the American's fete," he answered, with chilling coldness of manner.

"But—we cannot go."

"Why not, pray?"

"Because we have nothing to wear."

"Wear that thing you have on now. It suits you very well."

"This? Impossible!" she ejaculated. "It is pieced and patched from the band to the hem, and is totally unfit for such an affair."

"Where are the gowns your aunt gave you the other day?"

"They are evening dresses."

"Couldn't you turn them into day ones for this occasion?"

"No. They have short sleeves, and low necks."

"Surely you must have something that will do?" he growled, with a considerable amount of irritation.

"We have nothing," she said, decidedly.

"Nothing," echoed Ruby. "Our wardrobe consists of half-a-dozen cottons, in a more or less advanced stage of decay, a sarge gown apiece, not of the newest, and those aunt gave."

"Then—I suppose I must sacrifice myself, as usual," he said, with a doleful groan, drawing out his lank purse with evident reluctance. "Here are two sovereigns. Make the most of them, and appear well-dressed. I don't wish you to disgrace me on this occasion," and placing the money on the table he betook himself as speedily as possible back to his beloved books and easy dressing-gown.

"That won't go far," sneered Ruby, with a derisive laugh, as she picked up the yellow pieces, "towards our being well dressed. The ideas some men have about women's attire is rather amusing. They seem to think it is possible for a 'she' to dress elegantly on nothing a year, and to make a stylish appearance from January 1st to December 31st inclusive. Copeland Vane is one of them."

"I wish father had not accepted this invitation. I can't imagine what made him do so," sighed her sister.

"Can't you? I can. He sees the millionaire has taken a fancy to us, and means to trade on that."

"The millionaire may prove too many for him."

"He may. Still I hardly think he will," and her eyes again rested lingeringly on the fact that she knew had made the keen man of business foolish as any youth in his teens, with a bad fit of self-love on.

"I don't at all want to go."

"Why not?" asked the Duchess, surprised at the way in which these words were spoken.

"It will be so painful to me to see another in Paul's place reigning master of Temple Dene."

"I can understand your feeling. You must try and overcome it."

"It will take some time to do so, and I do not care to go anywhere now that he is not here to go with me. I would far rather stay at home."

"Of course. Still you see it may prove advantageous to us, and think how the boys will enjoy it!"

"True. I must not be selfish," and her gaze wandered to Billie, who was sorting the blackberries diligently.

"I think it will be delightful," he announced, looking up with shining eyes and a happy expression on the face that but too often wore a sad and wistful one.

"You want to go?" she queried.

"Oh, so much, sis!" he answered, going

over and laying his hand on her knee. "I shall think of nothing else till the day comes, and think of it for weeks and weeks after."

"Then you shall go, my pet!" she cried, catching him up in her arms and kissing him again and again—an operation to which he submitted with praiseworthy coolness.

After that she resolutely put aside her own feelings and entered with a will into all the preparations that were necessary—furnished up the boys' suits, went into Evesham with Ruby to purchase white cambric for their gowns, flowers to smarten up their old hats, and gloves and boots, which purchases swallowed up the two sovereigns and a few shillings they had besides.

"Still, we won't be ragged," Ruby said, triumphantly, as she cut out cambric, "and that's something for us to be proud of."

CHAPTER XII.

Meanwhile great activity prevailed at Temple Dene. Long shut-up casements and doors in the interior of the house were thrown open, to the intense discomfort of many a dweller of the deserted rooms. Spiders, moths, beetles, were expatriated in armies. Tapestried chambers were brightened up, long passages swept out, dimmishes and queer corners brought to light, and some extremely grand and extremely antiquated properties produced, which had been hidden away for more than a century, and which neither Fishlake nor Paul Chichester had ever seen, and which Mr. Spragg valued on account of their extreme age.

The large drawing-room was cleared for dancing, the great hall for supper. Merry-go-rounds were put up in the Chase, and swings and flying boats, and all manner of things to amuse the young.

The day dawned brightly; one of those fine balmy days of mild October, stolen from the "Indian summer." The sun shone clear and warm; the sky was cloudless; a thin violet haze lending a charm to the distant hills, softening the ruddy tint of autumn; the air full of sweet sounds and mellow fragrance, the perfume of ripened fruits and garnered grain, reaped from fields where, amid the tawny stubble, rose the smoke of the dinner-pot, or the puff of white cloud that precedes the sharp whiz of the bullet as it flies to deal death and destruction to some luckless feathered dweller of the wood.

The tenants and villagers for whom the fete was ostensibly given arrived early, the gentler coming later by slow but sure degrees, until the lawn was a kaleidoscopic mass of brilliant colour as the guests moved to and fro, listening to the music discoursed by the brass band from Evesham, watching those playing tennis and croquet, or trying their skill with a bow or a bat, and studying the bumpkins as they danced and frolicked on the lower lawn.

The county people enjoyed themselves every bit as much as the other and lesser folk. The marquesses, some for dancing, some for refreshment, were thronged; everybody seemed enjoying themselves, and Washington C. Spragg, Esq., standing on the lowest step of the flight leading up to the door, silently congratulated himself on the success of his venture; and knowing that nearly everyone, who was anyone, had arrived, felt himself at liberty to leave the place where he had received those bidden to the feast, and follow a certain white dress, that was disappearing in the distance, going towards the Punch and Judy show.

"Let me congratulate you on the number of good people you have gathered here to day!" exclaimed Mrs. Bevoir, stopping him half-way across the lawn. "How did you manage it? You seem to have asked just the right ones!"

"Do you think so? I am glad of that," he replied, evading her query.

"Yes. By-the-way, we have brought a friend with us. I hope you don't mind?"

"Not at all. Delighted to see any friend of yours."

"Thanks. May I introduce him? The Earl of Mount Severn—Mr. Spragg!"

Mr. Spragg bowed to the person indicated, an undersized, red-haired, freckle-faced man, looking more like a draper's assistant than a nobleman, who extended a hand and drawled,

"Verwy glad to make the acquaintance aw of such a well-known man, verwy indeed, aw."

"Pleased to see you," murmured the host, for the hundred-and-ninety-ninth time or more, for everybody had brought a friend or friends in the coolest way,

"Wemakable looking person. Weally, nevaw wemembaw seeing such a face befoaw," said his lordship to Clementina, as the American passed on.

"Isn't he dreadful?" she answered, with a spiteful laugh, for she had not forgiven his want of admiration for her own fair person, and his bad taste in preferring Opal.

"Twightful, weally twightful."

"They say he wants a wife," she went on, wishing to let the noble earl see that she, at any rate, was not in the race for the Yankee's money-bags, and was open to an offer from him if he were so minded. "I think he will have some difficulty in finding one, don't you?"

"If the lady he honaws with his attentions looks at his pwesty countenance, yes; if she thinks of the twemendous weight of his money-bags, no."

"You are severe on my sex."

"Not at all. Many women lay themselves out to mawwy wish men. Make a sort of twade of it, in fact, and don't cawe what the human pill is like so long as he is thickly coated with pwecious metal."

"I shouwd never de that," with a sigh and a sentimental look into his gooseberry green eyes.

"No, weally? Going in law love in a cottage. Eh?"

"Yes. Love is better than much wealth."

"Verwy few women think so nowadays. You awa a shining exception, quite a mawwaway."

"You don't meant that," she said, with a sharp glance at him from under her lids to see if he was making fun of her, but she could gather nothing from his wooden countenance.

"Weally I do, though, Mrs. Davidson," to that lady who had just joined the Bevoir group, "I appeal to you. Isn't a giwl who wants to mawwy law love, and live in a cotage, a wawwity for the present day?"

"I think she is rather. There are not many of them to be met with."

"Extremely few. In fact, I have nevaw met with one yet, and don't suppose I evaw shall."

For which piece of impertinence Miss Tina felt she would like to shake him, as it evidently showed he did not put much faith in her protestations of disinterestedness.

"Who is that elegant-looking man leaning against that oak over there?" inquired the widow, her large full eyes taking in all the perfections of Copeland Vane's handsome face and figure.

"Oh! that is Vane. Lives at the Rest. Won't do for you, Victoria; hasn't a penny!" explained Mrs. Bevoir.

"And who is the giwl with him?" demanded the Earl, putting up an eyeglass.

"His daughter," shortly.

"Ahd! What a pwesty giwl. Plenty of go about haw, I should say. Let's know me, will you?"

"Sorry to say I can't. Don't know them well enough for that."

"Nevaw mind; it doesn't mattaw. I'll get aw Spragg to do it," and he sauntered off after his host, followed by wrathful glances from Tina and her mother; for was it not too bad—Opal had bewitched the American millionaire, and now Ruby had won a very strong expression of admiration from the Earl of Mount

Severn's lips, their own friend, the man they had brought in order that he might have an opportunity of proposing to Tina?

It was maddening! And mother and daughter turned green with rage and jealousy as they saw him across his host.

"Sorry to trouble you, but will you kindly introduce me to that lady in white?"

"Which lady in white?" asked the other quickly, with a sharp glance at the Earl.

"A pwesty giwl with dark hair and eyes."

"Miss Vane?"

"Yes, that aw is her name."

"I shall be very pleased to," said Spragg, willingly, relieved to find it was not Opal he wanted to know, "if you can tell me where she is."

"She was neaw that mawquse a minute ago, but now she has disappeared. Nevaw mind, if you will?"

"With pleasure;" and then he hurried on, and found the girl he sought in the midst of a crowd of little ones, with Billie holding her hand, looking at Fanchi whacking Judy over the head. "This is not very interestin' for you," he said, as he reached her side, and she turned with a start, and encountered that gaze which always made her shudder.

"I—I don't mind," she stammered, "and Billie is amused."

"Do you like the show?" he asked the child.

"Oh, yes! I could stay and look at it all day long!" he replied.

"Dent you think you would get tired of it?"

"Oh, no!" with a decided shake of the curly head.

"Curious taste, even for a child."

"I don't think so," objected Opal.

"Don't you?" with an admiring glance at her beautiful face.

"No. Grown people like the theatre, many going nearly every night. This is the children's theatre, and the puppets the actors. They take as much interest in the gestures of the wooden dolls as we do in those of the living."

"I suppose they do," he agreed, reflectively. "You see I don't understand much about children. Never had anythin' to do with them. Like them though. Think they make a house sunshiny."

"They do," she said warmly. "Make those that are older forget all their cares and troubles, while they watch their innocent gambols," and she gave Billie an adoring look that the American would have given a thousand pounds to have had sent in his direction.

"True. They, have, I guess, a sort of humanizin' effect on the roughest and worst men."

"Yes."

"Now where would you like to go?" he asked, as the showman lowered the curtain. "That is all over for the present. Will you have a swing or a turn on one of those fine horses?"

"Oh, no, he mustn't go on there, please," interrupted his sister. "I am afraid he might fall off and be hurt."

"Very well. It is somewhat dangerous. Will you join the boys playin' in the meadow, or will you come with me and have an ice and some cakes?"

"I think I should like the ice and the cakes," announced Billie, after a second's hesitation.

"That's right. Come along," and taking the little hand in his, he retraced his steps, thus obliging Miss Vane to walk beside him, and led them to a marquee, where he supplied the boyish han with unlimited quantity of dainties, and filled his pockets with bonbons, and was so kind and attentive that the fair girl at his side forgot to shudder when he looked at her.

"I hope the flowers I sent pleased you?" he said, as they left the tent, glancing at the magnificent garland of white roses, which reached from her throat to her belt, and which exhaled a faint sweet perfume.

"Yes, thank you. They are lovely!" and

she glanced down at the blossoms admiringly. Flowers were a passion with her, and one that extreme poverty prevented being gratified often; so she had felt really pleased that morning when Claremont appeared at the Rest carrying two great boxes, which he presented, saying—

"For the Meesee Vane, with Mr. Spragg's compliments," accompanying the speech with an elegant bow, which was brought to an untimely end by Turk, who, the moment he heard the valet's voice, sprang up from the mat in the hall where he was stretched, and rushed at him with a growl, intending to have a bit out of the Frenchmen, for whom he had an unaccountable dislike, and who returned the sentiment with interest. But Opal was too quick for him, and seizing his collar with both hands held him fast, while Ruby picked up the boxes she let fall, and dismissed Claremont, who was evidently nothing loth to get out of Turk's vicinity with a polite message of thanks to his master.

"Whenever you want flowers, I trust you will not hesitate to send over for them," continued Spragg, delighted at the pleasure plainly visible on her face. "I will give the head-gardener orders to send you some every week if you will allow me to do so?"

"It is most kind of you to make such an offer," she answered, gratefully, "but we really could not trouble you by trespassing to such an extent on your kindness."

"It would be no trouble, and the kindness would be yours, to take and make use of some of the blossoms that will be lost here, to a great extent, as there are no dead fingers to arrange them prettily. There are so many, too; some of them will fade without ever leavin' the conservatories or forcin' houses, and your father has been so kind, so very kind and friendly to me, and has helped me in the matter of this fete so much, that I should like to be civil to him in every way that I possibly can. Therefore I trust you will give me permission to send some. I know Mr. Vane likes flowers," he urged.

"Since you—wishes it, then, thanks," she said, reluctantly, feeling a strange disinclination to accept favours at this man's hands, and only doing so because her father's love for flowers could be thereby gratified.

"No; thank you for givin' me the opportunity of showin' my gratitude, and I most sin—"

"Mr. Spragg, may I trouble you for a moment?" broke in a voice, and Mrs. Davidson touched his arm, and, after a few minutes' conversation, carried him off triumphantly to his extreme disgust and Opal's extreme relief.

The latter much preferred wandering about alone with Billie to being escorted by their host, and it was with a most childish glee she hurried down to the lake, and got into the little boat moored to the miniature wooden pier, and sat, with the child at her feet, rocking the tiny craft gently, listening to the music, which sounded delicious at a distance, if rather too loud at close quarters, gazing up at the blue sky, and last, though by no means least, thinking of the absent Paul.

It was just the sort of evening for dreaming of love—soft, balmy, sensuous, the gentle breeze hardly touching the waters of the lake, whose clear depths mirrored back every object near it.

The few fleecy clouds floating in the blue heavens, the trees that bent over, as if stretching out their branches like unyielding arms; the rocks and stones, the water-lilies and reeds that bordered its sedgy edges, and the lilies floating on its placid surface—everything, including a pair of figures sauntering along the banks talking, the one gravely and earnestly, the other lightly and carelessly.

The two were Jack Rainham and Ruby Vane.

"You haven't yet told me if you are really glad that I am to settle down here permanently?"

"Haven't I?"

"No."

"What do you want to know for?"

"I think you might guess that."

"I am not good at guessing. Some people are. Our host, for instance."

"Don't speak of him. Let us talk of ourselves. Are you glad?"

"Really I haven't thought about it," with a wicked, tantalising glance up at him that made his pulses thrill.

"Begin now, then, and tell me," bending down to look at the handsome, dusky face glowing with health and beauty.

"Oh, I can't!"

"Why not?"

"I have heaps of other things to think of."

"What things?"

"All sorts of things."

"Tell me one."

"Washington C. Spragg."

"Ruby!"

"What do you say 'Ruby!' in that tone for?"

"Because I am astonished at you."

"What is there astonishing, Jack, in a girl thinking about the richest man, with the finest place in the county? All the women are doing it, from Miss Bevoir down to Lundy Cramp, the village doctor's red-haired daughter; only, perhaps, they won't be candid, and own to it as I do."

"I thought you were different to most women," he rejoined, a pained look in his honest brown eyes.

"You see I am not."

"You say you are not."

"And it is the truth. Nature has only one mould. We are all turned out with much the same feelings and instincts, only education and certain surroundings develop or suppress them, according to whether they are good or bad."

"I differ from you there. The instincts of some are totally different to those of others."

"To those instincts that appear," she retorted. "What of those that are kept down and suppressed in people of birth and education?"

"They languish and die, probably, or else never exist at all."

"Pooh! You reason badly. Many women in high position would like sometimes to wrangle like a Billingsgate fishwife, and throw the nearest portable article at their lord and master, when his actions don't quite please them. It is only education and the habit of self-command in which they are trained from the earliest age that enables them to restrain their desires. Their instincts are just the same as those of a *chanteuse* or *danseuse*, who would hurl an inkstand or anything else at the head of a faithless lover. The apparent calmness of the former is simply the result of early training."

"Where did you get your knowledge of the world?" he asked, coldly.

"I hardly know. Comes to me naturally, I suppose."

"You are somewhat old for your age!"

"Say rather my ideas are old," she rejoined; "my face is not antique yet," and she lifted her blooming countenance saucily for his inspection.

"No, not yet. Still, old ideas may trace lines about your eyes and lips ere you are thirty."

"That won't matter," she responded, with the utmost coolness. "I shall be married to some millionaire long before that undesired time arrives."

"Ruby!" he ejaculated again, in pained surprise.

"What is the matter now?" she demanded, airily.

"You don't mean to say you are mercenary?"

"That depends. What do you mean by mercenary?"

"That—you would—marry—for money."

"If that is what you mean I think I am."

"You would sell yourself for filthy lucre?"

"I suppose I would. At any rate, I can't

stay all my life at the Rest, trying to make a shilling go as far as a sovereign, or farther."

"A rich marriage is not the only way of escaping that."

"No?" she said, inquiringly.

"You might marry some one you could love, who would make you happy," he whispered, tenderly.

"Happy in one way and unhappy in another."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that 'love in a cottage' would not suit me, and that I should never be quite happy except as a leader of fashion and a wealthy woman."

"Are you quite certain, Ruby?"

"I think I am."

"I don't want you to think, I want you to be sure, as your answer will mean a great deal to me. Are you certain that you could not be happy with a man of moderate means whom you loved and who returned your affection?"

He looked at her wistfully as he spoke, the rays of the setting sun lingered in his soft, dark eyes, and lit up the manly, pleasant face, with its drooping moustache and straight features.

"No, I am not quite certain," she responded, hardly proof against that tender look; and as he heard her words he caught her to him, there, under the shade of the giant oaks, and pressed passionate kisses on her face, while she, for once in a way, lost her self-possession, and trembled in his arms like a timid bird.

(To be continued.)

THERE is no spectacle more painful than the man who is the victim of unhappiness from every slight misfortune he meets with in his business. He literally makes troubles for himself—he plants thorns and thistles along his pathway through life, and frets out both body and soul by rubbing against them.

It is a mistake to suppose that happiness is in proportion to large means and ample resources, although many, looking with longing eyes at the freedom from care which wealth presupposes, fancy that the possession of an income like that of their neighbour would make them perfectly contented. Some of the truest satisfaction in life is enjoyed in the day of small things.

A girl may feel certain on this point—that, as a man treats his mother and sisters, so he will treat his wife six months after marriage. This may seem cold-blooded, very far removed from the tender feelings which courtship induces. But a girl has a choice to make—a choice upon which the happiness of her whole life will depend; and there is always a time, whether she notices it or not, before she parts with the control of her heart, at which she ought to listen to her judgment. Without better evidence than her own feelings she is very likely to make a mistake; but, if she can assure herself that her lover is a man who is respected and liked by his male friends, and is a favourite at home, she may be pretty sure that in listening to his love she is choosing wisely.

LIFE QUARREL.—An old lady recently died whose life had been saddened by a little quarrel. The day had been fixed for her wedding, and she and her intended husband began to put down carpets in the house they were to occupy. She wanted them laid one way, he another. They quarrelled and separated. He died shortly afterwards, and the lady never married. This should teach women the danger of permitting their husbands, or intended husbands, to remain in the house when carpets are being put down. No man will insist upon being present on such occasions if his wife hints that his absence would give her more pleasure. This same rule applies in taking up carpets.

THE MARRIAGE KNOT.

ON the whole, it seems best not to tie the knot too early in life, before the taste and judgment are matured; for the lover a woman would marry at twenty she would give the cold shoulder to at thirty in most cases; and a young man is in danger of being taken by a pretty face, without a particle of wit, and so by-and-by grows insensible to the faded prettiness, and feels the need of something more substantial and durable; and his friends say he has outgrown her, and she has crystallised where they first met.

Neither is it wise to wait too long; there are dangers in either course.

A man who marries late in life is in danger of marrying out of his generation, and generally contrives to select the person least in sympathy with him or his pursuits—one who cares more for his bank account than for his tastes or feelings, who has no associations with his youth or heyday, and no reminiscences in common.

It is in thus choosing that he makes his mistake, not in the act of marriage itself; for there seems no legitimate reason why man or woman should not marry after fifty, or why they should seem ridiculous in so doing, other things being equal.

Why should not one be capable of love at fifty as at twenty-five? Has not one age a monopoly of love over another? May not one love better at fifty than younger, with a larger nature, enriched by thought and experience, deepened by failure and success?

The love of twenty-five may be but a fleeting surface passion beside this other—a mere sham and glamour, subject to change and chance, which the next pair of velvet eyes may dispel.

Balzac says that men are most dangerous to women after fifty; that is, their powers have ripened and mellowed, and they have learned how to employ them; love is an ideal to them, and not a pastime; they have discovered what qualities they prefer, what attractions are durable and independent of age or circumstance.

"Nobody but we," said Hawthorne, in one of his letters to his wife, "ever knew what it was to be married. If other people knew it, this dull old earth would have a perpetual glory round about it."

And this charming bit of conceit should be more general, should be the creed of every husband and wife, suggesting a state of beatitude.

BELIEVE nothing against another but upon good authority nor report what may hurt another unless it be a greater hurt to others to conceal it.

PROSPERITY is consistent with intense worldliness, intense selfishness, intense hardness of heart, while the grander features of human character—self-sacrifice, disregard of pleasure, patriotism, love of knowledge, devotion to any great and good cause—these have no tendencies to bring men what is called fortune.

It's a strange thing to think of a man who can lift a chair with his teeth, and walk fifty miles on end, trembling and turning hot and cold at only a look from one woman out of all the rest of the world. It's a mystery we can give no account of; but no more we can of the sprouting of the seed, for that matter.

HEALTHY HOMES.—Let every man and his wife be their own sanitarians and make their home a centre of sanitation. Let in the sun, keep out the damp, separate the house from the earth beneath, connect the house with the air above, once, nay, twice in the year hold the Jewish Passover, and allow no leaven of disease to remain in any corner or crevice. Let the house clear itself of all impurities as they are produced; eat no unclean thing; drink no impure drink; wear no impure clothes; do no impure act; and all the good that science can render you is at your absolute command.

GLADYS LEIGH.

CHAPTER X.

"Of course you will send her away?" This was Barbara's remark when poor Gladys had been taken upstairs and placed on her own bed, with Mrs. Coniston's kind old housekeeper to take care of her.

"Why?"

"You could not think of keeping her."

"Why?"

There was something annoying in the persistent repetition of this one monosyllable. Barbara grew cross.

"It would be scandalous!"

"Why?"

Bab fairly stamped her foot.

"Sir Hubert was a disreputable character!"

"I never heard so; even then it does not make his daughter other than she is."

"He ran in debt, and died owing thousands."

"Lord Carew discharged all claims when he took possession of the Priory. There is no creditor left to reproach Sir Hubert's memory."

"Royal is absurdly generous."

"Well, my dear, you have prudence enough for two."

"But you won't keep Miss Leigh? Aunt, you know you have invited Lord Carew on a long visit. How can those two meet? The very idea is unseemly."

"I think not. I know as a fact that Lord Carew has never seen Miss Leigh. The name is not uncommon. He would never guess she was Sir Hubert's daughter."

"I think her feelings should be considered," said Bab, with unwanted feeling.

"Your generosity does you credit, dear. When Lord Carew fixes the date of his arrival I will ask Miss Leigh if she feels equal to meeting him."

"Aunt, you are too provoking!"

"I am agreeing with all you propose, Barbara."

"You don't understand Lord Carew."

"I never professed to, dear."

"Royal is awfully scrupulous and eccentric. At first he refused point-blank not to let me enter Arle Priory. Now, as mamma tells me it is being restored regardless of expense, I imagine he has changed his mind; but if he sees that girl he will go back again to his absurd scruples."

"How should the sight of her influence him?"

"She is just the kind of girl to arouse a man's compassion. She has a certain sort of babyish prettiness and clinging childish ways, just the thing to turn a man's head."

"You can't be very sure of your fiance's affection, Bab, if you suspect him of flirting with another girl under your very eyes."

Bab lifted the same eyes a little superciliously.

"I don't in the least suspect Carew of flirting; honestly, I don't believe he could."

"Then what do you fear from a meeting between him and Miss Leigh?"

"He is so absurdly generous, quite Quixotic, I may say, he'd as likely as not offer Miss Leigh a handsome allowance, or else resolve never to take up his abode at the Priory for fear of hurting her feelings."

"Lord Carew must be a peculiar man."

"He is very peculiar."

"And you are not afraid of entrusting your happiness to such an eccentric individual?"

"I am not in the least afraid. Even before his uncle's death I knew he would make me a duchess, and now he is out and out the best party in England."

"And I suppose you are very fond of him?"

"We are not at all romantic; we thoroughly understand each other."

"Of course, as eldest daughter, your father will give you a handsome fortune?"

"Of course," not thinking it needful to add. Lord Saville looked forward to Springfield Park and its revenues to help him to portion his younger children, and so could afford to be very generous to his first-born.

"I suppose he literally coins money?"

"Who—papa?" Barbara shook her head. "To tell you the truth, aunt, none of his ventures have succeeded of late. Whatever he has touched has failed. Poor mamma is getting quite uneasy."

"I don't wonder, with six unmarried daughters."

"The girls are sure to do well."

"I'm sure I'm glad to hear it. Has Lord Carew any brothers?"

"Not one."

"Well, when you are a duchess you'll be able to help your sisters; and now, I think, I'll bid you good-night, Barbara. I feel tired."

It was only nine o'clock, and Mrs. Coniston did not seek her own room. Instead she went upstairs to the chamber prepared for Gladys. Perhaps its dreary aspect struck on her with a little reproach, for she muttered to herself,

"Young girls ought not to be spoiled. I mean to be very good to her, but I won't have her head turned."

Another moment and she stood by the girl's bedside. Gladys was asleep; her long, dark eyelashes fell with a vivid contrast on her colourless skin; the small hands were folded; all about her looked peaceful and calm.

Mrs. Coniston watched her a moment to make sure she slept, and then, stooping down, kissed the fair open brow.

"She shall never know all I feel for her," murmured the stately lady; "I will never tell her how her story is linked with mine unless I find her worthy. I have been deceived so often; I must try her first."

When Gladys woke the autumn sunshine was falling on the bare, polished floor. The room that had seemed so dreary in the evening was now bright with morning freshness.

The girl lifted one hand weakly to her aching head, and tried to collect her thoughts. What had happened last night? How was it she had no remembrance of coming upstairs? Soon it had all returned to her, and dimly she knew that Lady Barbara was soon to be the mistress of Arle; that the man whom she had thought of contemptuously as "young Brook" was a peer of ancient lineage.

She was trying to nerve herself to get up and face the meeting with Mrs. Coniston, when the door opened, and a pleasant-faced old woman came in, a tray of breakfast in her hand.

She was Mrs. Simmonds, housekeeper at Springfield, and wife of the solemn butler. Mrs. Coniston was much attached to her, and pardoned in the cheery, bright-faced old lady a levity she would never have permitted in any other retainer.

Perhaps the butler felt his lady's forbearance in this matter, and so assumed an additional gravity himself to make amends for her shortcomings.

"Are you better, Miss Leigh?" asked the old woman, kindly. "My mistress says you are not to get up unless you are quite able. She breakfasts always in her own room, and she would like to see you there when you are dressed."

Gladys professed herself ready to get up at once, but Mrs. Simmonds insisted upon her partaking of toast and coffee. Then with her own hands she completed the unpacking poor Gladys had been too weary to think of.

"And I hope you'll stay with us, Miss Leigh," she concluded, respectfully, as she withdrew. "My mistress may have a sharp word and a frown for some, but she's a heart of gold for them that know how to find it."

Gladys trembled like an aspen leaf when half-an-hour later, she knocked at the boudoir,

door. Mrs. Coniston was reading. She closed her book as she saw who had entered.

"Sit down, Miss Leigh."

Gladys obeyed, still trembling. "I want to talk to you. You must have thought us Goths and Vandals last night, but Lady Barbara had no idea you were Sir Hubert's daughter, or she would never have spoken as she did."

Gladys felt her eyes fill with tears.

"Don't cry," said Mrs. Coniston, not unkindly; "it won't happen again; we are all quite ready to forget you have anything to do with the Priory. Bless me, child! dozens of girls are left orphans! Now, I want to ask you a plain question. Have you ever seen Lord Carew?"

"I never even heard his name till last night."

"He is going to marry my niece. He is the best part of the day, not because he is the heir to a Dukedom, but because his uncle, Julian Brook, chose to make him his heir. Of course you know the part Julian Brook played in your father's life?"

Gladys bowed her head.

"His nephew had nothing to do with it."

"I am sure of that. I never heard his name. I used to think of him as 'Mr. Brook,' but I know he has a generous heart. He offered to settle a yearly income on me—an utter stranger."

"Why did you refuse?"

"I would not eat the bread of charity—especially his charity."

"And you can meet him? Lord Carew is coming here this autumn on a long visit."

"He will have little to do with me," said Gladys, a little bitterly. "What has a nameless dependent to do with a Duke's heir? The chances are Lord Carew will never even guess at my identity."

"I didn't say anything about his feelings; I asked you a plain question. Can you bear to meet Lord Carew in this house—or shall I release you from your engagement?"

"I would rather stay."

"We have not frightened you, then, with what Barbara calls our perpetual gloom?"

"There will never be any more sunshine for me in this life!" said Gladys, gently.

"Mrs. Coniston, if you are content to keep me I am pleased to stay."

And so she stayed.

The time wore on, and Gladys realised the truth of Lady Barbara's description of Springfield.

There was a dulness about the place, a monotony about its routine, which was depressing. Mrs. Coniston was very sharp of speech, quick to blame, slow to praise. It seemed as if she had a positive delight in finding out the weak points in people's mental feelings, and dealing a cutting thrust where it would tell; and Barbara, who might have brightened up the companion's dreary life—Barbara, who was young herself, and might have had compassion on the lonely girl—Barbara was the most bitter drop in Miss Leigh's cup of woe; in her aunt's presence coldly polite, out of it insolent and overbearing, making poor Gladys' sensitive nature positively writhe under the slights she delighted to inflict.

The two girls breakfasted alone, and it was Barbara's chief amusement, when she received letters from any friend in the neighbourhood of Saville Place, to read to Gladys gushing accounts of the alterations and improvements at the Priory, asking her for descriptions of the rooms, passing her opinion at the changes made, keeping, as it were, the wound in the girl's aching heart ever open.

"I daresay Aunt Coniston will come and pay us a visit when we are settled down at Arle," said Lady Barbara, one dreary November day, when she had been inflicting her usual course of slow torture on Gladys, "and if you are still here, I will ask her to bring you with her. It would be a treat for you to see your old home really habitable at last!"

Gladys was very proud; she never entere

into her secret, but she kept perfectly calm and composed. Bab was irritated, and tried another shaft.

"How surprised your old servants will be to have a liberal master at last! Report goes they were pinched pretty sharply in your father's time!"

Gladys made no answer; she rose abruptly and left the room. Mrs. Simmonds met her on the stairs.

"The mistress is going into Birmingham with Lady Barbara for a long day's shopping; you'll have a lonely time of it, Miss Leigh!"

Gladys tried to smile; but for the misery of her own thoughts she would have rejoiced at the prospect.

Mrs. Coniston contrived to keep her thoroughly occupied, and an hour's absolute leisure was rare enough.

"I think I shall go for a long walk," she said, brightly. "I get so tired of being only in the grounds or driving with Mrs. Coniston in a close carriage. I will go on a long rambling walk."

"Then I'd better put you up some lunch in a little basket, Miss Gladys, for you'll not care to be back by one o'clock."

Gladys agreed. Dull and unpromising as the weather looked, it was unmistakably mild for the time of year, and beyond a leaden sky and a general muddiness under foot, it presented no obstacle to her plan.

Mrs. Coniston very rarely left the grounds unless to drive in a closed carriage. Bab openly condemned long walks as vulgar, so Gladys had had little opportunity of seeing anything beyond the street, and she started without an idea of where she was going, yet feeling it would be a positive relief to pass through the lodge-gates, and for once see what went on in the world beyond.

She almost shuddered as those gates closed after her, they had such a loud melancholy clang! then she wandered on till she came to a place where four roads met, and where a sign-board had been put up for the benefit of strangers. Two of its arms interested Gladys but little, being merely inscribed, "To Springfield," "To Town's End," but the remaining two were far more attractive, "To Norton Abbey," "To Riversdale."

She paused a moment before deciding. She knew from Mrs. Coniston that Norton Abbey was a species of show-place with a picture-gallery and a winter garden, both open to the inspection of visitors; Riversdale was noted for its rural scenery. Gladys reflected No-number would not add to the charms of scenery, and so the picture-gallery and winter garden carried the day.

It was a long walk, seven miles from the signboard, and Gladys had gone two before she reached that even, but the distance seemed as nothing to her in the delights of her freedom.

Mrs. Coniston would not be home until seven o'clock, it was now hardly eleven; for eight long hours Gladys was her own mistress, free as one of the red-breasted robins that chirped at her as she walked along.

She met few people, but each one paused to glance at the slight trim figure. Gladys little knew the picture she made in her small, close-fitting hat, her soft hair gleaming like gold in the winter sunshine, which had at last managed to pierce through the November gloom; her plain, black dress and long, tight mantle showed off every line of her sylph-like figure; exercise had put a faint rose-pink bloom tint to her thin cheeks, and she looked more like some little wandering princess than a humble companion enjoying a few hours' respite from her daily duties.

Gladys found herself very glad of Mrs. Simmonds' provisions for her creature comfort.

She lunched alone, and quite enjoyed the meat patties provided by the good old housekeeper; then she walked eagerly on, until at length she saw a grand Gothic archway rise

before her, and knew that she had reached the entrance to the Abbey.

But disappointment met her; it was not the day for visitors—no exception could be made to the general rule—so neither picture-gallery nor winter garden could be shown her. The lodge-keeper, who evidently felt for her disappointment, suggested the grounds and the ruins of the Abbey were well worth inspection.

"Is it ruins?" asked Gladys, puzzled. "Why, I thought someone lived there!"

"Lord Drysdale lives there, miss, right enough, but he has a new residence, at least we call it now, though it's three hundred years old. The old Abbey, which was built in the time of the Saxons, is just a heap of ruins."

Aye, but those ruins were beautiful even in their decay.

When Gladys stood among them she felt quite repaid for the walk—it was so lovely, so peacefully.

A great longing came to the girl that here, on this beautiful spot, Heaven in its mercy would have pity on her misery—on her lonely life, and take her to itself.

She had clambered up the remains of an old wall overhung with ivy, and now sat surveying the scene with eager admiration. So engrossed was she in its beauty that she never heeded the flight of time; the short November day was closing in before Gladys awoke with a start to the thought that she was ten miles away from Springfield Park, and had no way of accomplishing those ten miles except on foot.

She looked at her watch, a beautiful little toy Geneva, thickly studded with jewels, which had once belonged to her mother. Half-past four—only two hours and a half to walk in the gathering darkness, a distance that had taken her nearly double that time in broad daylight.

But Gladys was no coward; slinging her little basket on her arm she turned her back resolutely on the beauties of Norton Abbey, and set off on her long, lonely walk. She must have gone a mile or two before it struck her with a sudden dread that this narrow lane with its many buildings and detours was not the long lane which she had followed in one unbroken course from the signpost to the lodge gates. She had mistaken her road, and, instead of having accomplished a fifth of her distance, was now twelve miles instead of ten from Springfield. The mistake was easily explained—she had started straight from the ruins instead of going back to the lodge.

Poor Gladys! she was at her wit's end. To get back before Mrs. Coniston was now impossible, and an even worse fear assailed her—would she get back at all? The four additional miles her mistake had added were a formidable addition to her journey. She was tired already, weary, and dispirited; she hardly knew what to do next, when a large Newfoundland dog ran joyously up to her and began rubbing its head against her dress with every sign of affection.

Gladys had no fear of the noble animal. She patted his back with confiding kindness, and for a moment forgot her troubles. When she looked up she saw a gentleman beside her, a tall, fair-haired man with dark eyes—eyes full just now of undisguised surprise.

"I must apologise," he began, raising his hat courteously. "I fear the dog has frightened you, but you need not have any alarm. Rover is a little rough, but his intentions are kind."

"I am not afraid." She looked at her companion, and suddenly, without the least warning, two large tears fell slowly down her cheeks.

He saw those tears—saw them perfectly, but he was too true a gentleman to betray the fact. He said, as simply as though he had noticed nothing—

"I am afraid you have lost your way?"

"Yes, and oh! I am so frightened."

"There is nothing to be alarmed about."

know every foot of the ground hereabouts, and shall be only too happy to serve you as guide."

She shook her head sorrowfully.

"You don't know how far it is."

"Where do you wish to go?"

"Springfield Park."

"Springfield Park! Why, that is twelve miles and more."

"I know; I must have lost my way. I started from the ruins more than half-an-hour ago."

"And turned just in the opposite direction. Do not be alarmed, the matter is very easily arranged. If you will allow me I will take you to my mother for a few minutes until the carriage is got ready. It is quite impossible for you to walk to Springfield to-night."

"But it is such a trouble."

"Not in the least; we are only five-minutes from our house. Allow me to take you there at once. I daresay you are anxious to be at home as soon as possible."

"I wanted to be there by seven."

"Seven! that is a close shave. It is a quarter past five now, and it is over an hour's drive, but I think we can manage it."

"Really!"

"Really, so please do not look so sad. I assure you I will do my best that your aunt shall receive you safe and uninjured by seven o'clock."

An awful certainty seized on Gladys. He had mistaken her for one of the Ladies Ainslie, and would repent his courtesy when he knew the truth.

"Mrs. Coniston is not my aunt," she explained, hastily. "Indeed, I am not Lady Barbara."

"I never thought you were," said the young man, gently. "I quite acquitted you of any resemblance to her, but I did fancy, as nature plays strange freaks sometimes, you might be one of her younger sisters."

"Oh, no."

"And you are a visitor at Springfield?"

"No," said the girl, proudly, "only won't you understand, when I am trying so hard to make you; I am paid sixty pounds a-year to visit at Springfield. I am Mrs. Coniston's companion."

The gentleman's only answer was to open a small gate and lead her into some beautifully kept grounds, then up a flight of stone steps to a fine old Gothic mansion. He gave a hurried order to a servant in the hall, threw open a door, and took Gladys into a small sitting-room, bright with fire and lamplight.

"Mother," he said, to a sweet-faced, elderly lady, who was partaking very easily of afternoon tea, "I have brought you a young lady who has lost her way; she is staying at Springfield Park, and as it is a moral impossibility she can walk there to-night I am going to drive her home."

"I am so sorry," said Gladys, with a look on her face like a frightened child's, "but I could not help it."

"Surely you never walked all the way here?" asked the lady, kindly.

"Yes; you see, Mrs. Coniston and Lady Barbara are gone for a whole day to Birmingham, and I so longed to walk somewhere I had never been before."

"Gerald," said the lady, gently, to her son, "why don't you introduce me properly to our guest? I took her for one of Mrs. Coniston's nieces?"

"And prepared to freeze her accordingly," said Gerald, wickedly. "Mother, this young lady is Mrs. Coniston's companion. She has been admiring our old ruins."

The truth flashed upon Gladys.

"Then you are Lady Norton?"

"Yes, and this is my only son. You will let us know what we are to call you."

"My name is Gladys—Gladys Leigh."

Lady Norton took the girl's hand in hers.

"I knew your mother intimately, dear, and I am pleased to see her child. It is a pleasant chance that has brought about this meeting."

Poor Gladys flushed with pleasure, but alas!

the gilt ormolu clock on the chimney-piece struck half-past five. Her look of dismay was pitiful.

"You need not be afraid," said Lady Norton, quickly. "I have been to Birmingham myself this afternoon, and I heard Mrs. Coniston say in a shop she was not returning before the seven o'clock train. If you are at Springfield by eight you will be in ample time to receive her."

She looked at her son so intently that Lord Norton rose abruptly and left the room, then his mother turned on Gladys.

"Mrs. Coniston and I are old friends, only we quarrelled over our children. It was her darling wish that Gerald should marry her favourite niece, and when both he and I were far from attracted by Lady Barbara we became very wicked people indeed in her aunt's eyes, but I have a very real regard for her. Tell me, are you happy at Springfield Park?"

"I shall never be happy anywhere."

"My dear, you are too young to say that. Believe me at nineteen life may hold much pleasure for you, though you have lost both home and parents."

Gladys shook her head.

"I think I have lost the power of hope," she said, with a sob. "You see, Lady Norton, I have nothing to look forward to."

Lady Norton sighed. She had lost her own daughter, and her motherly heart ached for Gladys in her loneliness.

"Is not Mrs. Coniston kind to you?" she asked, wistfully. "I know she has a quick temper, but I used to think her heart warm."

"She is not unkind."

"My dear, if Springfield Park is an unhappy home for you do not stay there. There are plenty of other ladies who need a companion beside Mrs. Coniston."

"You don't understand," said Gladys, bitterly; "it is not that—it is the feeling that I am nothing to anyone, that all my life I shall be nothing but a dependent in other people's houses, a sharer of their homes. I am young now—I might live fifty years. Only fancy fifty years of wool-winding and letter-writing, fifty years in strangers' homes, fifty years of dependence!"

"It won't be so dear," said Lady Norton, quickly. "I don't think you could be left to such a life five years, much less fifty."

"You think I shall die then?" with a brightening of face and voice. "Ah! you don't know how I have wished for it."

"I think you will marry."

"Marry? Lady Norton, do you know I have not a penny in the world?"

"My dear child, all men are not fortune-hunters, and you have two gifts money cannot purchase—beauty and an ancient descent."

"Do you know what Lady Barbara says of my descent? She calls me a swindler's daughter. She told her aunt Lord Carew might not care to meet the child of the man who cheated him. As if my father injured anyone except himself."

"You must not mind what Lady Barbara says."

"I try not to, but you don't know what it is to have to listen always to her taunts; and, Lady Norton, do you know, have they told you, she is to be the mistress of my dear old home? I love every stone of the Priory, and the woman who has persecuted me ever since I saw her will live there."

"I know," said Lady Norton, gravely; "it has been the puzzle of our lives, of Gerald's and mine, how such a man as Royal Carew could ever care for Lady Barbara."

"Do you know him?"

"Intimately—he and my son were college friends."

"I used to hate him."

"He deserves nothing but admiration—he is one of those generous, ultra honourable men who grow rarer every year. If one of my daughters had lived to womanhood, Gladys, I would have craved no fairer fate for her than to be Royal's wife."

"And he will marry Lady Barbara!"

"It is a problem I cannot solve. How those two ever came together perplexes me to this day."

Enter Lord Norton, with his kindly smile, his pleasant, friendly manner.

"The dog-cart is round, mother, and it is barely six. I shall have Miss Leigh safe at Springfield long before her friends return. You may rely upon this, Miss Leigh," he said, with a mischievous smile, "for I am no favourite with Mrs. Coniston. I don't think I shall dare to call even on my friend Carew when he becomes an inmate of the Park."

Lady Norton drew Gladys to her, and pressed a kindly kiss upon her brow.

"You must come and see me again, Miss Leigh—only I cannot have you walk such a distance. Good-bye, my dear; I am very pleased to have met Sir Hubert's child."

Gerald lifted the slight form to the box-seat, sprang up beside her, and they were off. The splendid mare went a famous pace, and Gladys felt rather as though she had strayed into fairyland and utilised the services of the fairies to help her back again. Lord Norton thought he had never seen a sweater face than that beside him now.

"Have you been at the Park long, Miss Leigh?"

She gave him the exact time in weeks. I think there is always something pitiful about a date when people recall it so exactly.

"I have spent many a pleasant day there," said Gerald, laughing. "Barbara and I were playfellows—that was long before she had a handle to her name. I think we quarrelled perpetually—my mother says so."

"I can't fancy Lady Barbara quarrelling—she seems so cold."

"Ah, but she has seen three or four London seasons. Have you ever been in London, Miss Leigh?"

"I have passed through it."

"Never go there to live—London would spoil you."

"Why?"

"Nothing natural survives a London season."

"You seem to hate London."

"No, I am very fond of it; only, you see, Miss Leigh, I know its effect upon girls."

He talked of other things. The conversation never flagged. He kept her thoroughly amused until they saw before them the lodge gates of Springfield.

"Shall you be afraid to walk up to the house alone, Miss Leigh?"

"Not in the least. Oh! Lord Norton," as he sprang to the ground, and lifted her down, "how can I thank you for your kindness to me?"

"By remembering my mother's invitation, Miss Leigh, and promising your next holiday shall be spent with us."

Another five minutes and Gladys was safe within her own room, Mrs. Simmonds following to hear what could possibly have detained her favourite.

After all, Gladys was in the drawing-room a good ten minutes before the sound of wheels proclaimed the return of Mrs. Coniston. The two travellers were tired and irritable when they assembled at dinner. The only face which reflected anything bright or cheerful was that of the young companion.

"What have you done to yourself?" asked Lady Barbara, pettishly. "You have quite a colour!"

"I went for a long walk."

Mrs. Coniston looked at her sharply.

"It seems to have agreed with you!"

"Did you have a pleasant day?" Gladys ventured to ask.

"Detestable! I hate shopping; and I met a number of disagreeable people."

"Including Lady Norton?" put in, Bab, audaciously. "Auntie, she looks more supercilious than ever."

But however frate Mrs. Coniston might be with her old friend, she allowed no one else to disparage her.

"Lady Norton looked what she is—a charming elderly lady. Bab, my dear, when shall I teach you it is bad style to run down people because they don't happen to admire you?"

Bab looked cross.

"I shall certainly never invite Lady Norton to the Priory, nor that conceited coxcomb of a son either!"

"Lord Norton is a particular friend of your fiancée's. I think you forget that, Bab."

"I don't mean Royal to have the choosing of our guests, I can assure you, aunt."

The letters had arrived in the ladies' absence, and were now brought in on a silver waiter. There was only one for Lady Barbara. She tore it open, and perused it with eager, anxious eyes.

"Only think, aunty, Carew will be here tomorrow! And he can spare us a month if you will have him for such an age."

"I will have him as long as he likes to stay," replied Mrs. Coniston; and Gladys could see she was very much pleased. "I am looking forward to an introduction to my future nephew."

"It is very short notice."

"With a dozen spare bedrooms, I don't think that signifies. Lord Carew shall have the red rooms, Barbara; and I shall give up the orange drawing-room to you and him to make love in."

"We don't do such foolish things."

Mrs. Coniston smiled.

"I don't think it foolish."

"Aunt!"

"I object to engaged people making themselves ridiculous before others," said Mrs. Coniston, frankly, "but I don't disapprove of them being affectionate when alone; so, Bab, I make over the orange drawing-room solemnly to you and Lord Carew, and I request you both to retreat thither whenever you feel too rapturous for the society of such sober people as Miss Leigh and myself."

"I believe you are laughing at us, aunt."

"I assure you I am not."

"And do you still intend to foist Miss Leigh upon Carew's notice against my expressed wishes?"

"Bab, I won't have Miss Leigh discussed before her face, as if she were a lay figure. She will meet Lord Carew as she would meet any other of my guests. I don't suppose the similarity of name will strike him, and I assure you I have no intention of labelling her as 'Gladys Leigh, late of Arla Priory, only child of Sir Hubert Leigh, &c.,'"

Poor Gladys, how her cheeks flushed! Mrs. Coniston's manner was kinder than usual when she bade her good-night.

"You need not mind, my dear. I don't suppose Lord Carew will ever guess who you are, and you won't see much of him, except at meals. You and I will sit up in my boudoir most of the day, and leave the lovers to themselves."

The lovers! Gladys could not fancy Lady Barbara in that position. There was nothing in the least romantic or tender about Barbara.

The next day was full of preparation. The red rooms had to be entirely rearranged. Finding Mrs. Simmonds and her assistants in great confusion, Gladys kindly lent her aid with those dainty finishing touches a lady's hand gives so well; and finally, as a heaping of coals of fire on the head of the man she had called her enemy, she went to the conservatory, and begging a few hothouse flowers, arranged them on the toilet-table in a plain glass vase.

"They make the room look quite different," she thought to herself. "Will he wonder if Barbara brought them? Oh! no; lords and ladies are much too grand to do such things, even for their lovers."

Punctually at four Mrs. Coniston and her nieces drove to Town's End to meet their guest. Gladys sat upstairs in her own room. She would not go down until a few minutes before the gong sounded; she would not interrupt



[GLADYS SURVEYED THE SCENE WITH EAGER ADMIRATION, OBLIVIOUS OF THE FACT THAT SHE WAS TEN MILES FROM SPRINGFIELD PARK.]

the family privacy while they refreshed the new arrival with afternoon tea.

She had hated this man once with a fierce, passionate hatred. Since she had heard her mother's story her feelings had changed. Still, the new master of Arle could never be to her as an indifferent acquaintance. She could not think calmly of the meeting between the new owner of the Priory, the possessor of countless thousands, and the penniless descendant of its ancient lords. She did not want Lord Carew to recognise her; but if he did, of one thing she was resolved—she would not have his pity. If the effort killed her she would be cheerful, even gay, in his presence; she would throw aside her depression; she would behave as though the post of Mrs. Coniston's companion was one of unalloyed bliss. Whatever happened Lord Carew should not think she wanted to work upon his pity, and so bring about a renewal of the offer she had once so indignantly spurned.

Hitherto she had cared little about her appearance since she came to the Park, had put on her thick black serge in the morning, and changed it for a crêpe trimmed cashmere in the afternoon. Almost unconsciously now it seemed to her both these costumes had about them something of a wailing nature; their gloomy aspect a little resembled the placards attached to the coat of a sightless man "Pity the poor blind," only in this case the unspoken appeal was "pity the humble companion." Gladys did not want Lord Carew's notice or admiration, but she would not have—she could not bear—his pity; and so on this first evening of his visit, for the first time since her father's death, the poor orphan was making a toilet.

There was but scant time for it, and even scantier choice of materials, but Gladys remembered dimly an evening costume which Cousin Sophy had bought her one day when guests were expected at the Gables. A violent headache had prevented Gladys from joining the party, and the costume had re-

mained forgotten, but now, quick as thought, it flashed upon Gladys it might serve her purpose.

Had she been in colours she knew Mrs. Pearson's taste would have been execrable. She almost trembled as to what vagaries that cheerful matron might have introduced into a black costume. She opened the box a little doubtfully. She saw a petticoat of rich black silk lightly trimmed with crêpe and jet, a polonaise entirely of crêpe thickly bordered with jet; a necklace and bracelets of jet accompanied the dress, and the bodice cut square in front was finished with soft white lace—a very elegant affair indeed.

Gladys put it on, gave one look in the glass (standing on tiptoe to do so), and decided she was a success. She had not forgotten her lover—true women rarely do forget. She had not forgotten home and father; but weeks of a quiet regular life of freedom from sudden emotion had restored the bloom to her cheeks, the brightness to her eyes. It was a more fragile Gladys than she who a few months before had received Mr. Lorraine at the Priory, but was a far more lovely girl. That Gladys had only the promise of beauty, now the promise was fulfilled. Mrs. Coniston's companion looked simply lovely. She fastened a creamy rose at her bosom, opened the door, and turned to go downstairs. Another five minutes, and the gong would sound. She wanted to be safe in the drawing-room under Mrs. Coniston's wing before Lord Carew and his *fiancée* appeared. She had hurried past the entrance to the bedrooms and was turning to descend the grand staircase when the rose fell from her dress. She stooped to replace it and heard Lord Carew's door open. The staircase was exactly between them—retreat impossible. In spite of all her care and forethought she must meet her enemy face to face—alone and unannounced.

Thud, thud—he was coming nearer. Another moment, and her draperies would touch his clothes. Gladys fastened her re-

fractory rose at last and turned—to find herself face to face with her life's love, the man she had known as James Lorraine.

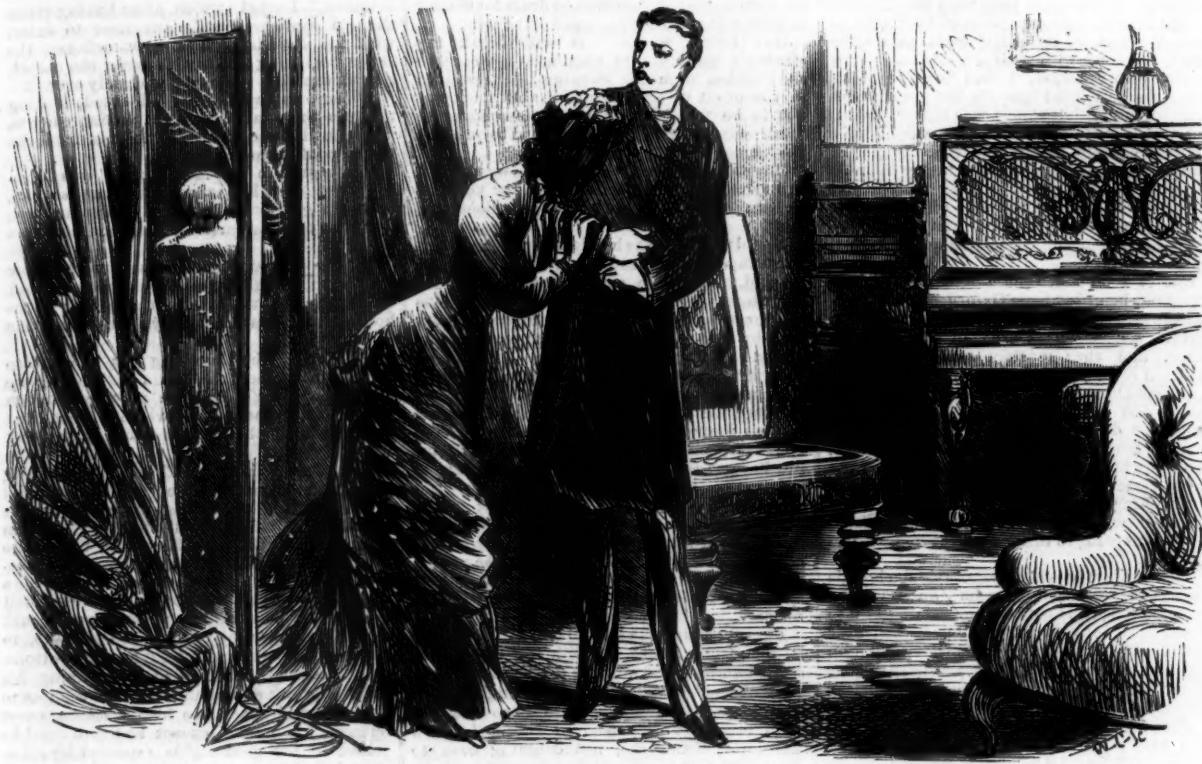
(To be continued.)

I BELIEVE the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility doubt of his own power, or hesitation of speaking of his opinions, but a right understanding of what he can do and say, and the rest of the world's sayings and doings. All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it, and are not only right in their main opinions, but usually know that they are right in them, only they do not think much of themselves on that account.

TRAINING OF THE MIND.

There is probably no human faculty that is more in need of faithful and patient cultivation than the judgment, for there is none that has more complications to deal with or more difficulties to overcome. Nevertheless there is, perhaps, none which receives less sympathetic discipline, or upon which people generally are less willing to expend their labour and thought. They train their children's memory, exercise their powers of expression, school them in the habits of industry, endurance, patience, and self-control; but seldom discipline their judgment or teach them how to draw just conclusions. That, they suppose, is something which time and experience will do for them; yet, when they see what hasty opinions and ill-advised judgments are continually formed by older people, they might infer that some definite education in this respect was necessary for both old and young.

All, from the humblest to the highest, need to cultivate a careful and accurate method of thought in all things. The cause of things and their true relation to each other do not lie on the surface, waiting to be picked up, but are often far down out of sight, and must be dug for to be discovered.



[“COME IN! TO BE OUT IN SUCH WEATHER AS THIS WILL KILL YOU!”]

NOVELLETTE.

MY TWIN SISTER.

—
CHAPTER I.
A SAD MEMORY.

B-R-R-R! How cold it is! my hands almost frozen, as I sit with my back to a huge fire in my comfortable study! It was just such a night as this when the great sorrow of my hitherto happy life came upon me; the snow-flakes falling fast and thick, burying beneath them my youth, covering me with premature old age when on the threshold of my manhood's existence.

Ten long years have fled since then, and now I am but twenty-nine, with streaks of silver in my black hair, and a careworn expression on my lined face.

Ten long years I have waited, waited in vain, and yet something whispers to me still to be patient—that my darling will return—until I feel as confident she will come back as that the bells will at twelve o'clock ring out the Christmas chimes; and yet those very bells each year mock me in my agony, bringing to my mind so vividly the night when she left me, without a word—we two who had been all in all to each other—and went out, I knew not whither, into the bitter night, the biting cold, with the old house-dog alone to lick her hand in silent pain as she passed him by.

Inez, beautiful Inez, but nineteen! I see her now as I saw her on that day, my sweet sister. Her face fair as a poet's dream, with eyes of cerulean blue, and hair like floss silk lying in golden rings on her white forehead. We two, the twin children of our parents, with none other to share their love!

My father, Sir Joshua Mandover, was chief magistrate of Ludham, the town in which we lived, our house being situated a-quarter of an hour's walk from the same, with its pretty French windows, one each side of the entrance

door, also of glass in unison with the former, opening on to a sloping lawn, whilst a flight of stone steps from the latter led to the carriage drive, over which the stately oak and beech interlaced their strong arms.

On the right was another room, looking on to a small pasture, from the conservatory leading to it, whilst a thick belt of wood and shrub divided us from the main road.

One or two summer-houses, like gothic cottages in miniature, were placed on the grounds, and rustic seats disposed invitingly beneath trees which in the hot season completely shaded one from the sun's rays.

Our mother was a fair, fragile creature, to whom we appeared to be the sole thought of her existence; and never shall I forget the night when Inez left us, and the paper placed in her hands, all blotted with tears as it was, telling her that she had left her home for ever.

She gave one look at the cruel snow, blown hither and thither by the more cruel wind, a speechless agony on her faultless features, and fell to the floor.

But the shock was too great for her delicate frame. From that moment she never spoke again, but gradually sank until the cup of our sorrow was filled to overflowing. She was dead.

And Inez—what of her? From that day not a sign, not a word, whilst the sympathy between us tells me she is not happy, and there is nothing left me but to wait, only in dreams being with her, as in those happy days when, beneath Heaven's canopy, we would sit together on the soft, warm grass, she gazing up at the fleecy clouds as they rolled into strange shapes, on their way across the firmament, and I weaving daisy chains, or wreaths of summer roses, to crown her golden hair.

And he, the serpent who crawled into our paradise, and culled the sweetest flower, I could even forgive him, could I think he cherished her as we had done.

From our cradle Inez and I had never been

parted, she pursuing her studies under the tutelage of a lady resident in the house, and I having an experienced tutor to instruct me in the necessary Hebrew, Greek, Latin, etc., in addition to a sound English education; until my father rather startled me one morning by the information that he had made arrangements for me to enter one of the Universities, and not long after I found myself the recipient of those playful attentions usually bestowed on a freshman at Oxford or Cambridge.

The former was the one to which I was destined, and on the morning of my departure Inez hung round my neck with all the tenderness of her gentle nature, whilst the tears she could not restrain started to my own eyes, when, straining her to my bosom for the last time, I bid her good-bye, with the promise that I would write at least once a week, trusting that she would also do the same.

I pass over the events of my college life, which was much as other young men's of my own age, though I take it to my credit, not so rascally as some.

Amongst my companions was one Richard Ives, four or five years my senior in reality; but from the first taking me under his wing as though he was older by fifteen.

He was always ready to show me life, as he called it, and on every occasion acting the Mentor to my Telemachus. Other fellows frequently told me he was not to be trusted; but further than his repeatedly borrowing five-pound notes, the repayment of which entirely vanished from his memory, I saw no particular fault. He was even anxious to do me any little service I might want, and, in fact was most friendly.

“You must come down and see us, old fellow,” he said, alluding to his home. “My mother and sister will be delighted.”

Mrs. Ives, like her son, gave me a hearty welcome, when, after repeated invitations, I at last went, whilst the sister, a pretty, black-eyed brunette, shyly held out to me the tiniest white hand in existence.

It was decidedly a jolly time that I spent at Hill House, the name given to Dick's home from the fact of its being built on a slope which led down to the river's side; and with Laura, pretty Laura, I was deeply in love before we had lived beneath the same roof a short fortnight, but then I was only eighteen, and maybe my susceptible heart would have warmed equally to any other pretty girl in whose society I spent so many happy hours.

Laura was two years younger than I, and we soon came to think more of each other than anyone else, speaking and looking as lovers should, interspersed with an occasional sigh.

But it soon ended more seriously. Their house not being far from Oxford, our meetings became frequent, until I found, boy as I was, myself deeply enamoured of my friend's sister, and thus matters stood when the vacation commenced.

It was Dick's last term: he had passed his exam, and taken his degree, and I felt I could not do less, after the hospitality I had received from his widowed mother and sister, than give him an invitation to accompany me to my father's.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure, Claude," was his reply; so I wrote, telling Inez I was going to bring a college chum home with me.

Dick made himself as agreeable during his stay that he soon became an immense favourite with the pater, who declared him to be the most sensible young fellow he had ever met; and when I asked my sister's opinion with respect to my friend, the deep colour which mantled her fair cheek was sufficient answer.

The weeks that followed were very enjoyable, and when the time came that I should return to Oxford, I think Inez appeared equally grieved to part with Dick as myself, whilst my mother pressed him to join our party at Christmas, an invitation he eagerly accepted, returning with the holly and mistletoe to our happy home.

It was just such a night as this; the snow, which had been threatening for some time, coming down in tiny flakes, gradually growing larger and larger, until the hard ground was covered in virgin whiteness.

Dick had been with us now ten days, and it wanted but three to Christmas. When returning from a walk, in which I could not induce him to accompany me, I entered the drawing-room in the hope of seeing Inez, when as I thought it was deserted, and I was about to retire, my attention became suddenly arrested on seeing the latter and Dick in the conservatory adjoining. He had just gathered a rose, which he was placing in the bosom of her evening dress, and, so wrapt up were they in each other that they were unconscious of my presence.

"No, no, Dick," I heard Inez say. "I should never forgive myself did I accede to your wishes. It would break my mother's heart," and although her back was turned to me I could see her head droop, until taking his hand between her own she pressed kiss after kiss upon it.

"Then if you have so little faith, Inez," he replied, withdrawing his arm from her waist, "your love must be very small."

Her reply I was unable to hear, but as she turned I could see her lift her face to his with such lovelight in her beautiful eyes as no man could fail to understand, and I could almost hear her heart beat with tumultuous joy as he again encircled her in his arms.

To play the eavesdropper was most repugnant to my feelings, and so as not to let them suppose I had been an unconscious witness of the scene I purposely stumbled over a footstool to make them aware of my presence.

"You are soon back, old fellow?" said Dick, suddenly releasing my sister, and meeting me with the greatest nonchalance. "Miss Mandover and I were admiring the wintry landscape without."

"I see you were," I growled, when making

an excuse that it was time to dress for dinner I, after a few moments, again left them.

But Inez's words, "it will break my mother's heart," kept ringing in my ears, in conjunction with the warning I had received in the onset of our friendship that Dick was not to be trusted, and before descending to the drawing-room I had determined to question the former on the matter.

But the only reply I received was that I must have been dreaming, and for the first time in my life I felt that Inez was deceiving me.

Two days after she had left her home, Dick her companion, without one farewell kiss, not a word, not a sign save the soft which involuntarily burst forth as the night previous she threw her arms around my mother's neck, and the tear-stained letter which later on was placed in that mother's hands.

At first I seemed paralysed, but afterwards determined to call on Mrs. Ives. That lady received me most kindly, but Dick's conduct was as inexplicable to her and Laura as to ourselves, no objection on either side having been at all probable to have been made to his marriage with my sister; and notwithstanding my love for the former, I felt glad to leave the house, carrying with me since his mother's assurance that she would communicate with me as soon as she knew the whereabouts of her son, and an inward thirst for revenge on him who had wrought us such misery.

I received but one letter from Hill House—it was from Laura. Dick, she said, had settled abroad, but nothing further as to what part of the globe he was favouring with his hateful presence, nor a word to comfort me with respect to my beloved Inez. I threw the letter from me, not deigning even to answer it, and from that day I heard no more, whilst our lives drifted apart—pretty Laura's and mine—through his treachery.

CHAPTER II.

THE RETURN.

How long I had thus allowed my mind to wander back to that time ten long years ago I knew not, until the sound of voices without recalled me to the present.

It was the waits, no amateurs either, but the clear, well-trained voices of our youthful choir, which blended in harmony as they sang in the cold frosty air.

Enough to kill them, I thought, whilst listening to the bitter wind shrieking like a demon round the gable-end of our house, for a moment drowning the music of the children's singing, when a gentle knock came to my door, and the last note died away.

It was Johnson—our old butler—who had from long service become as much a portion of the former as the fixtures themselves.

"Do you know the time, sir?" he asked, casting a furtive glance at the little clock which ticked complacently on behind me, whilst he gave the glasses on the tray he carried, as I thought, an unnecessary jingle, to bring me to the recollection that it was Christmas-eve. "It's just on the stroke of twelve, and here's the fire nearly out," he continued, casting a reproachful glance in my direction.

"So it is, by Jove!" I answered, shivering as I turned to witness the truth of his assertion, and bidding him replenish it without delay. "I must have been asleep," a fact which my fallen pen and benumbed fingers went far to verify.

"So I should think," was Johnson's retort, whilst with much blowing and puffing, he succeeded in reviving the flickering flame, when from the church clock resounded the first stroke of twelve.

"There she goes!" he said, alluding to the latter, and straightway rushed to the window to let in, as he said, Father Christmas, and I considered anything but an agreeable draught.

"For Heaven's sake, shut the window,

Johnson," I cried, which, after having given the old gentleman sufficient time to enter, with his attendant train of snowflakes, the latter beginning quickly to cover the carpet, he did, drawing the curtains closely over it.

"Where is my father?" I asked, looking towards the punch bowl, and the ingredients, which had been his habit to mix from the time I could remember.

"He's gone to bed, Mr. Claude," was Johnson's reply. "His rheumatism was so bad, poor old gentleman, that he said as how you would do the customaries, and send him up a glass."

By the customaries, Johnson meant knew the punch, of which the servants were invited to partake from the hand of the master of the house each Christmas-eve previous to retiring for the night.

Of course, I had nothing left me but to obey, the former the while instructing me as to the exact quantities required of each ingredient to make the whole perfect, and soon a steaming bowl of the desired compound was the result.

"That's the thing, sir!" said the presiding deity in the form of Johnson, whilst he quaffed a silver thimbleful evidently much to his satisfaction. "Shall I fill them up?" and on my answering in the affirmative the entire establishment filed in, from the cook-house-louper, a very majestic lady, who wished me a merry Christmas (although she knew well mine would be as dull as a Christmas could be), and many happy returns of the same, to the nimiest specimen of boyhood in buttons, who snatched his lips after inhaling his share without expressing a single wish as to how I should spend the festive season, never opening his mouth except to drink until he joined in the good-nights repeated by all as they left the room, and I heard him inform the kitchenmaid it was "scrumptious."

As was his habit, Johnson, presuming on his length of service, stopped to have a word or two after the others had retired, which meant an extra glass with the young master.

"This is a Christmas, sir, this is," he said, stirring the fire which had now burnt into a cheerful blaze; "we hain't had such a one this ten year, not since Mr. Claude—" and then he stopped.

"No, Johnson; you are right," I answered, knowing what he would fain have said, "not since Mr. Ives was here." I could not bring myself to say her name, although it was of her we were both thinking.

"You'll excuse my asking you, sir," said Johnson, "but I suppose you have never heard what become of our poor young lady?" and there was a wistful look in the old man's eyes, to learn some tidings of the girl he had nursed when an infant.

"Not a word, Johnson, not a sign has reached me to tell me whether she is dead or living, though I have an inward conviction that my poor Inez is in trouble."

"You have, sir?" said Johnson, not fully understanding what I meant, whilst seeing that the tears had started to my eyes he refrained from asking an explanation, and a few moments later, with a look of pity for me in my distress, he wished me good-night and retired.

How long I remained where he had left me staring into the burning coals I know not; a feeling of dreariness came over me, and the sense of a kindred spirit hovering around me which I could not withstand filled me with a superstitious dread, bringing to my mind the story of the Cornelian brothers, and I almost prayed that if it were only in spirit I might be permitted once more to behold my beloved sister.

At last with an effort I arose; the fire had again almost died out, and the stillness of death pervaded the household, and with a determination to retire also to rest I advanced, intending previously to see if it were still snowing.

I drew aside the heavy curtains. It was coming down a thick cloud of feathery flakes,

and I was about to reclose the former when the consciousness that I had seen a figure approach the window as I was about to carry out my intention withheld me.

For the moment I was startled; but a strange hope overcoming all fear which I might have felt I hastily opened the latter, when I perceived crouching close to the threshold the form of a woman, her black dress quickly becoming white in the falling snow, whilst her heavy breathing was distinctly audible.

"Who are you?" I asked, stepping from the open window. "Come in. To be out in such weather as this will kill you," and assisting her to rise I led her within.

She had not spoken; but her form hung heavily on my arm as I bade her lean on me for support, whilst her laboured breathing was painful to hear, and not till I had made her sit by the fire, which I stirred to new life, did she uplift the heavy veil covering her features.

With a start I could not suppress I stepped aside; then recovering myself I was the next moment pressing the wasted form to mine, chafing her cold, benumbed hands, whilst every term of endearment I knew I used to induce her to unloose those icy lips.

"Inez, my beloved, my darling, speak to me!" I cried, whilst I removed her hat, thus unloosing the wealth of her golden hair, the only charm left unchanged in my beautiful sister. "I am here, dearest—your brother Claude. Won't you speak to me?"

She raised her head from my shoulder, on which I had pillow'd it, and her eyes looked into mine; but, oh! the tale of agony, sorrow and remorse which was concentrated in their blue light whilst the pallor, almost of death, pervaded her features.

"I could not die till I had seen you, Claude," she said. "To know that you have forgiven me. Tell me you have, brother, and then I shall go away happy—yes, happy!"

"But you shall never go from me now, Inez, my darling," I cried. "You shall stay with me always, and the happy days will come back to both."

"Never, never, never!" she answered, wildly. "No, Claude, I must go even now. Kiss me, dearest. See, the snow has ceased. Let me out; I cannot, dare not stay. I only wanted to see you."

"But, Inez," I persisted, "I would not send a dog out such a night as this. Where are you going to, love, and I will come."

"No, no," she cried, as she readjusted her hat and veil. "I am going to him. See, I have covered him with my cloak, it is fur. I was so weak, Claude—so weak, or we should both have come to you, brother, he and I."

"My sweet sister," I said, endeavouring to detain her, "our house is yours. Stay now; my father—our father—would never forgive me for letting you go out in this weather."

"I could not stay," she answered, vehemently, "to let him know how low I have fallen. No, Claude, don't tell him that I have been here this night. Nurse Harvey will give me a shelter for a time, and it will be only a short time that I shall want one; but he—"

"Don't talk of him, Inez," I answered, impatiently; but seeing the pained look on her countenance I took her thin white hands in mine, cold and ringless both, and then I lifted my eyes from them to the pinched worn face drooping before me.

She seemed to read that questioning look, as quickly withdrawing them from my grasp she threw her arms around my neck whilst convulsive sobs shook her frame, when with one passionate kiss she tore herself from my embrace, and went out into the bitter cold, the stars alone looking down sadly on her in their brightness.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE CHURCHYARD.

To follow Inez was my first impulse, and I had even moved from the window with the

intention of getting my hat and coat, when on second thoughts I considered it would be wiser not.

Mrs. Harvey's cottage was but a short distance, and was it true that she returned to Dick? I felt I was not in the humour to meet him, so I went back to look out on the night. The snow had ceased, a soft white cam resting beneath the moonlight, even the wind apparently hushed to sudden stillness.

I was thankful for Inez's sake, knowing that but a few moments would elapse before she would reach her destination, so once more reclosed the curtains, and the old church guarded the secret I knew not of.

Christmas-day had set in, the hands of my little ornate clock pointing to two A.M., but all sleep had passed from my eyelids, after all, not feeling satisfied that I had not persisted in accompanying my poor sister, followed by a vague comprehension of her meaning when she told me she had covered him with her fur cloak. Surely, I considered, there must be some mistake! Bad he might be, but he could never be such a brute as to shield himself from the winter cold, and let her go on half-clad as she was?

Yet another thought puzzled my brain—why was Inez so thin and wan? It was impossible that want could be the cause. Dick a rich man, and his own master! Then in imagination I once more caressed the white, transparent hands, the fingers bare even of the plain golden circlet, when a horrible suspicion entered my brain, and instinctively I fell on my knees, and prayed Heaven it was not true.

After a time I became calmer, determining in the morning to seek Inez—not naming her midnight visit to my father—and then ascended to my room, with a dull pain at my heart, to dream troubled dreams, in which my twin-sister was ever prominent.

"A merry Christmas to you, Claude!" said my father, on my putting in an appearance an hour after the usual time for breakfast, a greeting which I returned, thinking the while what an empty one it was, the more so that I felt not only depressed but thoroughly miserable, and for the first time in my life was glad when the old gentleman informed me of his intention to go to church.

The bells even seemed to mock me, jarring almost painfully on my senses as they burst out into a joyous peal, whilst a little robin redbreast hopped on the window-sill, giving in his way the compliments of the season, and begging a few crumbs for his Christmas dinner.

Having finished breakfast, or, rather, an apology for the same, I drew my chair to the blazing fire, when Johnson entered to clear the table.

The snow which ceased when Inez had gone forth the previous night had not fallen since, while a bright, welcome sun shone out on haw and berry, causing the frost to sparkle as diamonds beneath its rays.

"Did you go out last night, Mr. Claude, after I left you?" asked Johnson.

"Go out!" I said. "Why, what should make you think such a thing?"

"Because, sir," and he advanced to the window, "you see them footprints leading right up here. It's someone who comes after it left off snowing, and I'm thinking they couldn't be up to any good."

"Then, I suppose, you mean to infer I should have been up to no good if the footprints had been mine, Johnson?" I said, with a forced smile.

"Now, Mr. Claude!" and the latter looked at me reproachfully, knowing, as I did, that he, at least, thought that I could do no wrong; then cleared the table silently, whilst I was supposed to be reading by the fire.

Shortly before one o'clock my father returned, looking very blue about the face and red about the nose. It was bitterly cold, he said, and there was but a very small congregation in Ludham Church.

Widow Thompson, he said, had stopped

him to say that a child had been found sleeping on one of the graves in last night's snow.

"A child!" I exclaimed, a horrible thought flashing through my brain. "How did she know?"

"One of the bellringers, her son, on leaving the church after having rung the Christmas chimes had his attention drawn to what appeared a heap of black on the white ground. His mates had gone on before, so he went to ascertain what it was, and was not a little surprised on stooping down to see the face of a little boy. He was sleeping as soundly as though he had been in his bed, and the snowflakes rapidly weaving his shroud around him."

"And have they found any clue to how he came there?" I asked, anxiously.

"No; it seems a mystery. However, Tom lifted him gently from the cold earth, having first assured himself that he still breathed, and then carried him home as a Christmas gift to his mother."

"How old was he, father—did they say?"

"Between three and four years," was the reply. "And far from looking on him as a burden or property likely to be reclaimed, the old woman is in raptures, declaring he must have been sent her from Heaven."

"It seems strange!" I answered, determining after lunch to proceed to Nurse Harvey, and hear from her what had become of Inez without further delay.

My father had invited a few friends to join us later on, so that it was imperative I should return before dinner.

Notwithstanding that several times I had been on the point of telling the former of my sister's return on the previous evening, I refrained from doing so, in the hope of learning more of her sad history before recalling to his memory the sorrow of his life at a time when, at least, for a few hours, he might forget it. So, leaving him in his easy chair by the fire to enjoy his afternoon nap, I started in quest of Inez.

A strong, and by no means unpleasant, scent of roast goose and onions assailed my olfactory nerves on nearing Mrs. Harvey's cottage. When I entered there was a strange look of expectancy on the woman's face I could not understand.

"I am glad you are come, sir," she said, after wishing me the compliments of the season, "as altho' I feel sure she was all right, poor young lady. I should have felt somehow anxious like if you hadn't been to tell me."

"Tell you what, nurse?" I asked.

"Why, Miss Inez, Mr. Claude. She's with you, ain't she?"

"Miss Inez with me!" I exclaimed, a terrible dread throbbing at my heart. "Why, I came expecting to see her here!"

Mrs. Harvey dropped the spoon with which she had been basting the goose, and throwing her apron to her eyes.—

"Oh! my poor young lady, my poor young lady!" she cried, "what can have become of her?"

And then between her sobs she told me how that Inez had left her house the previous evening, coming, as she said, to me.

"Was she alone?" I asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "She came all sudden like; but I know her as soon as she opened her mouth to ask if Sir Joshua was still livin', and Mr. Claude; and when I called her by name she said she was come back to the old place to die, but must see you, sir; so with a kiss from her sweet lips, after having asked me to give her a night's lodgin', she was off again afore I could stop her," and Mrs. Harvey again sobbed, while I remained as one paralysed.

At last recovering myself I went out, telling Mrs. Harvey I should leave no stone unturned to find my darling. I had one faint hope left, a hope that the boy found sleeping among the dead might be the means of leading me to her, and, futile though it was, I at

once repaired to Mrs. Thomson's, where, alas! my worst fears were realised.

In their true English home, by a blazing fire, which threw a warm glow over the room, gradually darkening in the waning light, sat the widow and her son, the latter in the full enjoyment of a clay pipe, whilst a golden-haired boy was watching from his mother's knee the blue smoke, as it curled and rose to vanish into space.

I did not undeceive them in the belief they held that it was through curiosity on hearing from my father of the strange Christmas gift they had had that I had visited them.

The tears were yet wet on the long dark lashes shading the blue eyes of the child, who ever and anon, growing weary of watching Tom, would cry for his mamma, but further than that, he was too young to give any explanation respecting himself.

"It was a clear case o' child desertion, an' no mistake," was Tom's verdict, an' though his mother didn't want him to, he thought it only right to give information to the "police," which he had done.

An argument between the two was the result of this speech, whilst I sat with my eyes fixed on the baby boy, until finding how late it was I went away, a heavy sorrow at my heart, and those baby eyes ever present with me: and Inez, my beautiful sister, where was she?

CHAPTER IV.

LAURA.

I WAS so distract on my return that my father could not avoid noticing it, asking me once or twice if my wits had gone wool-gathering, and my friends conjectured that I must be in love, I having no other apology to offer for my absence of mind than that I was suffering from a severe headache.

"I think I will go away for a few days. I have not been feeling very well lately," I told my father, when later on we sat by the fire after our guests' departure.

"You cannot do better, Claude," he replied, "for you certainly do not seem yourself, and a change would probably do you good."

So the next day I started for London, and from thence to Oxford.

I did not stay in the collegiate town, being anxious at once to proceed to Hill House, hoping there to receive news of Dick's whereabouts.

Mrs. Ives and her daughter were both greatly surprised to see me, so many years having elapsed since we last met; but notwithstanding, they gave me a most cordial reception, but I knew they fancied some other reason than the seeing them alone had caused my visit.

Laura was Laura Ives still. From the pretty girl whom I had loved when a boy she had grown to be a lovely woman, and I was vain enough to think, from the admiring glance she favoured me with, that she had formed no mean opinion of myself.

Mrs. Ives looked thinner and more worn, but was as cordial and hospitable as ever.

"You are so altered! At first I scarcely knew you," she said, warmly shaking my hand.

"Yes, Mrs. Ives," I replied. "Ten years is a long time!"

"You are right," she answered, with a smile. "Laura, you see, is quite a woman, whilst I am grown almost grey."

"I think you but little changed," I said, "whilst time with Miss Ives has acted like a magician's wand."

"And has taught you the lesson of flattery," she laughed. "But tell me," she continued, "have you any better engagement than to stay with us, and make this your home during the time you are in Oxford?" and on my answering in the negative, it was mutually agreed that I was to remain at Hill House.

I fancied a brighter colour suffused the cheek of Laura on hearing my assent to her mother's invitation, and I wondered if it

could be true that the old love had not died in all those long years.

Her brother was never mentioned by either, and I felt I could not, until alone with the former, enter on the subject.

Mrs. Ives naturally, whatever his faults, would cling to her absent son; whilst with Laura one girl's sympathy for another might save her for from being blind to his shortcomings.

"Mamma always enjoys a dark hour, Mr. Mandover, so I know you will excuse the gas not being lighted just yet," she said, as after dinner we adjourned to the pretty, cosy drawing-room, with the fire alone to remove the darkness, while it threw a warm glow over the rose-pink coverings of the rosewood furniture, casting a soft, quiet charm over all, as a few moments later Mrs. Ives fell into a gentle slumber, and Laura filled the room with subdued music and softened song, until even that died away, and unconsciously each became wrapt in their own thoughts.

"You must think us awfully stupid!" she said, at last, rousing herself from her reverie. "Don't you think we have been quite long enough in darkness, Mr. Mandover?"

"Why don't you call me Claude, as in the old days?" I asked. "Or is the past so utterly erased from your memory that we are to be to each other as strangers?"

She did not attempt to withdraw the tiny hand I had imprisoned within my own, and even in the dim firelight I could see the colour mount to her temples.

"I have never forgotten," she said. "They were happy days—too happy to last, you see."

"And would you have them return, Laura?" I asked, drawing her nearer to me.

"Yes," she answered, "if the wrongs my brother did you, Claude, had never been."

"I should be unjust in the extreme to hold you responsible for your brother's faults. But tell me, Laura, dearest," I asked, anxiously, "have you heard of Dick? Where is he now?"

"He is living with his wife on the Continent, I believe. But don't ask me about him," she said; "I cannot bear to speak about it," and, releasing herself impatiently from me, she moved towards Mrs. Ives.

I had no further opportunity that night of again speaking to Laura on the subject, though her strange words, "She could not bear to speak about it!" kept recurring to my mind, doubling in my thoughts the mystery surrounding Inez's return to Ludham.

What could it all mean? Was it possible that she had gone back to her husband, after all? "But as the recollection returned to me of the sad, worn face which looked into mine on Christmas-eve, I could not bring myself to believe it was so."

I had been now a week at Hill House, and finding all my efforts to draw Laura out respecting her brother's affairs unavailing, I thought to return home, thinking it likely by so doing to hear tidings of my poor sister.

"So you are determined not to extend your visit?" Mrs. Ives asked, on my telling her of my intention to return home.

"Yes," I replied, "much as I regret doing so. I feel it necessary that I should not be away longer."

Then, as the former left the room, turning to Laura,—

"Will you miss me, dear?" I asked; "and may I take away with me the promise that you will be my darling wife?"

I had advanced to where she sat, her one hand nervously opening and shutting a book which lay on the table, whilst I clasped the other, waiting for the answer I longed to hear.

I had learnt during those days spent at Hill House that she was dear—very, very dear to me; and when she upbraided her soft, dark eyes to mine I read her answer there, and then I pressed her to my heart—my own, my darling!

The book with which she had been toying fell to the floor with a bang, which startled

us in our first love-dream, and on stooping to recover it a letter fell from between the leaves.

I was about to replace it in its former place when Laura, hastily seizing it, put it in her pocket, with the hope, I could not mistake, that I had not seen the handwriting, but was too late. It was Dick's.

I could not fail to recognise that illegible scrawl—one could call it nothing else; but why she should endeavour to conceal it was to me a puzzle, the more so that it was addressed to her mother.

I felt, in consequence, an unconquerable desire to see the contents, and believed if the opportunity offered itself I should not hesitate to avail myself of it.

Mrs. Ives was much pleased on hearing of her daughter's engagement, and, my time being short, she allowed us several opportunities of love-making by every now and then remembering that her presence was required elsewhere.

"I know mamma runs away because she thinks we don't want her company," Laura said the next morning, as the former had had an imaginary cause to leave the room. "Let us go for a walk, Claude; it is beautiful out;" and, on my acquiescing, she left with the intention of dressing for the purpose.

She had taken her handkerchief from her pocket on opening the door, and as it closed behind her my eyes became riveted on a small white thing lying on the carpet, and with a sudden impulse I seized Dick's letter.

My hand shook, and I felt like a guilty creature as, resuming my seat, I hastily opened it, fearing that I should be disturbed before having time to read its contents.

Laura must have noticed the change which had come over me on her return, for she had to remind me twice that she was ready before I realised the fact, when apologising, saying I must have fallen asleep, I staggered to my feet, going out into the cold, frosty air, with her hand resting on my arm, as in a dream, and that letter scorching into my heart.

CHAPTER V.

FOUND.

I FELT a relief when once more I found myself in the train speeding homewards. To stay longer with Laura and not tell her of my discovery was impossible, and the fear that did she find out the surreptitious way in which I obtained my knowledge she might discard me for ever filled me with dread.

I felt so bowed down with my sorrow that had she shut her heart against me I should have succumbed to my unhappy fate. Even that bitter feeling of revenge I harboured against Dick became softened as in imagination I could see her dark, velvety eyes fixed on mine in gentle pleading that I should withstand my purpose.

The new year, bright and smiling, appeared to give me a welcome home. The ground was still covered in white, and the hoar frost sparkled as brilliants in the sun.

"They have discovered the woman who deserted her child and left it to perish on Christmas Eve," my father said, when we sat together over our grog on the evening of my arrival.

"Yes," I answered, "have you seen her?"

"No," was the reply, "she is to be brought up to-morrow morning, when Thompson will appear against her."

"Where did they find her, and what kind of woman is she?" I asked, anxiously.

"There was a reward for her apprehension, and it appears some people who sheltered her on that night, hearing her rave in a fit of delirium (for it appears she was almost dead when they took her in) about her child, came to the conclusion she must be the woman wanted, so gave information to the police, with the result that she will be brought before me to-morrow morning."

"Poor thing!" I said, whilst a fearful dread of which I could scarcely realise the fact ran through my brain.

Ludham was a small town, on market-days alone evincing much more life than the surrounding country. But it had its town hall, police station, and court house, all within a short distance of each other; it boasting but one principal street, with tiny lanes and alleys emerging from the same, and a large square, in which twice a week were ranged stalls for the sale mostly of farm produce from the neighbouring villages.

The latter of the public buildings, with the exception of holiday times, was little used, the inhabitants being mostly of a quiet, law-abiding class, though at times a black sheep would steal into the flock; but on this morning there was great excitement amongst the townfolks, and the space within allotted to the public was completely filled when Sir Joshua took his seat on the bench.

One moment I felt the hot blood rush through my veins with fevered madness, the next a cold chill caused me to shiver from head to foot, as I took my seat watching the proceedings.

Like one in a dream I heard the subdued voices of those assembled; I saw the mysterious going to and fro of policemen, the whispered conferences of the gentlemen seated at the table, the advent of my father's clerk, who took his place beneath the magistrate, and then I heard "Silence" uttered in a stentorian voice, and my father himself entered.

There was an unusual list of charges this morning, and when I saw a woman ushered into the dock I strained my neck to catch a view of her features, but soon saw that she was not the one for whom so many were anxiously waiting.

She was a middle-aged Irishwoman, against whom a gentle, fair-haired lady appeared for assault, it transpiring that not only did this daughter of Erin insist upon having the kitchen in her sole possession, but resorted to force of arms in ejecting her mistress to carry out that determination on the latter asserting her right to enter it.

"Och! an' she be no leddy at al', at al', yer honour," said the former, with a scowling look at her prosecutor, "for wasn't it herself that dhrove me to it by tellin' me to lave afore I had been in the house a fortnight?"

"My only wonder is she kept you so long if you behaved there as you are behaving now," was my father's reply, with the addition of seven days, in which she could draw a comparison between the service she would be called upon to perform and that she had lately left, when raining anything but blessings on his head and that of the fair-haired lady she was removed to the gaoler's room.

One or two cases of people failing to distinguish between *meum* and *tuum*, others who had imbibed rather more than was good for them at the expense of five-shilling fines, and then there was a simultaneous stir in the little court as a young woman was placed in the dock, with audible remarks, which were speedily hushed, when "Silence" was again enforced by that voice which did not fail to command obedience.

I saw Mrs. Thompson with her son enter a few moments before, the latter carrying in his arms the boy he had rescued from the death awaiting him in his snowy bed. They sat on a form assigned them behind where the prisoner stood, awaiting the time they would have to give evidence.

I could feel my heart thump-thump within me, the sight of that trembling creature, whose features were completely hidden beneath a thick veil, having fully aroused me to a sense of my situation; then as the charge was read Thompson's name was called, and he entered the witness-box.

He told plainly how he had with his mates left the church about half-past twelve on Christmas Eve when they had been ringing the bells, and how it was that his attention

was attracted to where the child lay, his tiny head pillow'd on a grave, and the snowflakes rapidly covering him.

I never looked at Thompson, my eyes being irresistibly drawn to where the prisoner clutched at the rail of the dock for support. Through the veil which covered her features I fancied I could see the agony working over the same as her bosom heaved perceptibly beneath her thick ulster; but as a child's cry was heard in the court she quickly turned to the spot from whence it proceeded, when up-raising her veil "Mamma, mamma!" echoed through the building, and the boy, freeing himself from Mrs. Thompson's embrace, rushed to her arms.

In that moment all was forgotten by her save the recovery of her lost treasure, whilst all assembled appeared to reverence the mother's feelings, and acquit her of the crime with which she was charged.

To me those minutes seemed as hours until she should again turn, so that her face might become visible, and when she did—when those eyes which I longed though dreaded to behold fell on me with their mute appeal full of intense suffering—I felt an agonising pain shoot through my frame, and then the court, the prisoner, the assembled crowd swam before me. I heard a shuffling of feet, a piercing scream, a jumble of excited voices, and whilst, as though paralysed, unable to move, I saw my father carried senseless from his seat.

He was taken to his private room, and a doctor quickly summoned, and when I had sufficiently recovered my scattered senses to follow I found him slightly better. It was only a fainting fit I was told, but when I stooped, so as to hear what he appeared anxious to say to me, Inez was the name which fell on my ear.

It did not need this explanation to tell me the cause of my father's sudden indisposition. I knew too well that those beloved features could never be erased from his memory, and what I had dreaded had come to pass.

A quarter-of-an-hour later he asserted to his attendants that he was able to resume his child, and once again the prisoner, who meanwhile had been withdrawn, was placed in the dock.

The latter had schooled herself previously to be able to stand the trial, and this time her fair face was uncovered as she stood there with her baby-boy clinging to her slender form; and I, her twin-brother, with a kindred spirit, suffering in unison with hers, my arms the first to embrace her, when a few moments later she stepped forth acquitted—a free woman.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TELEGRAM.

It was but a nine days' wonder, that scene in the court-house, and then Ludham became restored to its original quiet.

Inez was again an inmate of our home, and though numerous conjectures were raised by the servants with reference to her sad history, they soon began to lose the curiosity they at first felt in the pleasure they experienced in having her once more amongst us, whilst my little namesake became the pet of the household.

Week past week, Dick's name never mentioned—all remembrance of him, as far as I was concerned, resting alone in the shattered frame and sad face of my once joyous sister. She had been very ill after that dread experience in a felon's dock; and much at times as I desired it, I did not deem it advisable to recur to the past, nor did I let her know that I was in possession of her secret until some time after.

I had paid another visit to Oxford, and was delighted in finding the Ives in total ignorance of what had transpired. Whether Laura thought I had taken the letter she dropped or no she never mentioned it. I told her of Inez's return in the hope that she would speak of Dick, but to no purpose, she being most reti-

cent on anything connected with her brother; but on her accepting the invitation I gave in my father's name that she would come and stay with my sister for awhile, I determined before she arrived to speak of him to the latter.

The early spring had set in, budding trees as though by magic bursting into new life. Inez and I were seated by the open window through which little Claude could come and go at will.

"Why did you not name him after his father, Inez?" I asked. She looked up from the toy whip which she had been repairing with those soft, sad eyes, in which the sorrow never died, whilst she quietly answered,—

"Do you like it better than Claude?" and then resumed her occupation.

"Laura will be here next week," I continued. "You will be happier then, darling."

"Laura, here!" she exclaimed, "his sister Then I must go away."

"Go away?" I answered. "Why should you go away?"

"Oh! Claude, don't ask me. You don't know, dear, or even you, perhaps, would not have sheltered me. I know I was wrong to come here, but the temptation was too great, and I feel you will forgive me that; but to meet Laura, your future wife, she would never forgive the insult thus offered her. No, no, Claude! dearest brother, I have brought misery enough on you already. I will spare you that."

"And if she knew, and still longs to meet you as a sister, Inez?"

She lifted her face to mine—a smile of indecision beaming over her features.

"He would never tell her," she said, "and would you love me less, Claude, did I tell you?"

"You have no need to tell me, Inez," I answered, pressing a kiss on her mouth before she could complete the sentence, and then I told her how I had learnt the story of her misery and his villainy.

"Hush!" she said. "Remember he is my child's father."

"And you still love this man, Inez?" I asked.

Her golden head drooped, drooped till it became buried in her hands; when sob after sob broke from her bosom, and I knew that my sister (as I felt a jealous pang at my heart) alone loved Dick, the man who had wrecked her life's happiness, the wretch who had robbed her of her youth and beauty, and then left her to perish.

Whether my thoughts were reflected on my countenance, as I threw a pitying look upon her, I know not, but she appeared to read them, when recovering from her sudden emotion.

"No, no, Claude," she said, "he was not the villain you deem him; it was not his doing that I had neither food nor shelter. He did not drive me from his home, but I fled, tearing myself from his embrace, which I had no right to receive, crushing the love he gave me beneath my feet because it was not mine; and taking with me my boy and my broken heart, but loving him still, thus making my misery the harder to bear."

"My poor darling!" I said, whilst drawing her closer to me. "To know that he was kind to you, Inez, I could almost forgive him the rest."

"And Laura?" she asked.

"Laura knows all, dear," I answered, "and is too good a girl to be uncharitable. She will love you, Inez, if you will let her, and will, if she can, make some reparation for a brother's fault."

A kiss was her only answer, and from that time we both looked forward eagerly to Laura's visit, Inez even seeming to regain a little of her former spirit, as she superintended preparations for her visit, whilst little Claude became the constant companion of his grandfather.

I had had several letters from my darling, and it was arranged that shortly after her stay with us our wedding was to take place,

I feeling that now Inez had returned my father could better dispense with my society.

The day of Laura's expected advent at last arrived, when, as the hour drew near, I, with my sister, anxiously watched for her coming from the window which looked on to the drive.

"She must have taken a later train than she intended," I said at last, after having fruitlessly strained my eyes until they ached, and my ears with the same result in the expectation of the first sound of carriage-wheels and the first glance of my fiancee falling on my senses.

Thus hour past hour, and still no arrival on the part of Laura, till I became so restless and excited that I was confident an accident on the line must have happened, and forthwith dispatched a servant to the station to ascertain the cause that the train was so late.

It was the last which would arrive at Ludham that day; therefore, on the return of my messenger with the intelligence that it had come in some time since, I knew it was useless to watch for her longer.

"What could it all mean?" I asked, expressing my fears to Inez that Laura must be ill, feeling sure that nothing else would make her disappoint us.

"I should telegraph if I were you, Claude," she answered, and I was about to carry her proposition into effect when a loud, double knock at the hall door attracted our attention, and a few minutes after a servant entered with the significant yellow missive.

I hastily tore it open, whilst the latter stayed, awaiting the reply.

Yes; it was from Laura.

"Come quickly; bring Inez with you. Cause imperative. Return answer prepaid."

My sister was looking over my shoulder reading the message, and further than that I could feel her hand tremble, as it rested on me. I did not stay to mark the effect of the message on her, when hastily filling in the reply I delivered it to the servant.

Then turning I saw Inez, from whose face every vestige of colour had fled, whilst her eyes had become distended with the fear which had taken possession of her.

"You will go, dear?" I asked.

"Yes, yes!" she gasped. "Oh! Claude, can it be that Dick is ill, perhaps dying?" and she burst into tears.

"I cannot say, my sweet sister," I replied; "but you must not meet sorrow half way, but be the brave little woman you always were, for my sake and for—his."

I could scarcely bring myself to utter the last word, but I knew, if such were the case, that any ill-feeling I might have harboured towards him must now give way; therefore, tenderly kissing her, I told her to prepare for the journey, whilst I went to advise my father of the reason of our hasty departure.

The latter was in his favourite room; it was already dark, and lighted but by the cheerful fire, whilst the old gentleman, with little Claude on his knee, was sitting near the same, making rabbits on the wall to the intense delight of his little grandson.

He was in the belief that Inez had left her husband, due to the unkind treatment she received from him; but into minute details he never cared to inquire, hoping in his heart they would eventually be reconciled, whilst neither she nor I deemed it advisable to enlighten him on the subject; therefore he readily assented to our speedy journey, promising the while, when at the last Inez pressed the boy to her bosom, that he would take every care of him during her absence.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE GATES OF DEATH.

We had not a moment to spare to catch the last train for London, therefore without waiting to select more than was absolutely necessary we were soon on our way, with a small portmanteau, which we easily placed

beneath the seat of the first-class compartment we had entered.

We had but one fellow-traveller, an old gentleman, who immediately ensconced himself in a corner, putting his legs on the seat, and covering them with a large plaid, after which arrangement he composed himself to sleep, a state of unconsciousness evidently (from the snores proceeding from his side of the carriage) he had little trouble in attaining, whilst Inez and I remained both silent in our own thoughts.

There was no moon, and the intense darkness, relieved but by the faint light emanating from the lamp in our carriage, seemed weird and strange, as we rushed on to the snort of the engine, and the occasional shriek of the whistle, until numerous coloured lamps in the distance assured us we were not far from our journey's end, and with a start, as a man entered with a lantern to collect our tickets, our fellow-traveller awoke, under the impression that he had just fallen asleep.

It was imperative to remain in London that night, so after having assured ourselves as to the earliest hour we could proceed to Oxford the following morning, we adjourned to the nearest hotel.

It was with difficulty that I could prevail on Inez to partake of any refreshment previous to our retiring, but the assurance that she would require all her strength on the morrow appeared to influence her in inducing her to partake of what I had ordered.

Her room adjoined mine, and I could hear her all through the night restlessly pacing the same, with at short intervals an attempt to sleep, during which her sobs reached my ears.

There was a hushed stillness surrounding Hill House on our arrival, which appeared to confirm our worst fears, and as Laura threw herself into my arms I could see her pretty eyes were red with weeping; then, as she advanced to Inez, her own sorrow faded before the great grief portrayed in the countenance of the other.

There were no tears now in my sister's; the suffering she was enduring was too great for words, too intense to well forth, save by a burning look of agony, approaching almost the fire of madness as it became apparent in the dumbness of her despair.

"Won't you speak to me?" Laura asked, approaching to where she stood, and tenderly taking her hands within her own, which she allowed to remain within her clasp. "You know we are sisters, dear," she continued, "and I want you to love me for his sake, and he, Dick, wants us to love each other."

The sound of his name seemed to recall her to where she was.

"Dick," she asked. "Oh! tell me, is he here?"

"Yes, and wants you to go to him," was the reply.

Laura released her cold hands, so bitterly cold, and with her own unfastening her travelling wraps she led her from the room, her arm gently encircling her slender waist, as the eyes of Inez alone spoke of the gratitude she felt.

Mrs. Ives was seated by the fire of the room they entered, of which the blinds were lowered to exclude the light of the noonday sun, whilst on a bed shaded at the head by heavy blue curtains lay the form of Dick.

The former held up a warning finger that they should not disturb the invalid, who had just fallen into a gentle sleep; and on Laura silently bringing Inez forward, she clasped her affectionately in her arms, telling her to rest there until her son should awake.

Unresistingly she sat where they placed her, no sign, no movement, to speak of the terrible sorrow working within, the only sound in that still chamber the heavy breathing of the sufferer, as he would toss from side to side, and unconsciously mutter in his sleep.

The minutes seemed as hours, nothing to break the fearful quietude but the monotonous tick of the gilt timepiece marking those

minutes as they passed, until becoming more restless Dick awoke.

"Mother," and as Mrs. Ives moved towards him she so placed the curtains that Inez's form was hidden from his gaze until she had in some measure prepared him for the meeting; whilst Inez herself, scarcely able to restrain her impatience, awaited with beating heart the time when she could press her warm lips to his.

"Is she come, mother?" she heard him ask, and on Mrs. Ives answering in the affirmative, she could stay no longer, as with tremulous steps she approached to the bedside, and then she recoiled with fear at the sight which presented itself.

Could those sunken eyes, those drawn features, belong to her once handsome Dick? But as a feeble smile passed over them and a tender lovelight beamed over that pallid countenance she fell on her knees beside him who was her world, her life, whilst she begged for forgiveness for having ever left him.

"There is nothing to forgive, pet," he said, as, extending one thin, transparent hand, he rested it on her golden head. "What you did, love, you did from a pure and true motive, whilst I, sinner that I was, thought to deceive you; but my sin found me out, and I have, indeed, suffered for the wrong I contemplated. When you left me, Inez, my life became a blank. I could not rest; I dare not follow you to where I hoped you would go, for Claude, I knew, would never rest until he had revenged himself on his sister's betrayer."

"Hush, darling! You must not talk so much now. Wait until you are stronger, and then you can tell me all."

It was Inez who spoke, as she bent low over the sufferer's bed, allowing her fair face to rest against his hollow cheek, whilst her tears fell on his broad forehead.

"No, Inez," he continued, "I shall feel better when I have told you all. When you left, darling, I determined to pursue inquiries. So many years had passed since Helena and I had parted that a hope I dared not cherish—the straw to which I clung like a drowning man—gave me fresh vigour to continue my search, and five days after you left me, with only that short, cruel note to tell me we had parted for ever, I was again in England, having fully made up my mind that my heart should break before I would seek your presence until I could prove that hope fulfilled, or your love should induce you to drown your scruples in that great love which you said you had for me."

"That could never be, Dick, though the parting broke my heart."

"But, Inez, my beloved!" he added, drawing her face nearer to his own, "you are, you always were my—"

But the weakness against which he had struggled overcame him before he could complete the sentence.

Inez felt his cheek grow deadly cold against hers, whilst the hand she held fell lifeless by his side, his breathing so faint as to be scarcely perceptible.

"He is dead! he is dead!" she moaned, "and I have killed him! Oh, Dick! Dick! my own, my darling, speak to me! Look up at me, dearest!" and she convulsively clung to his inanimate form.

"Hush, Inez!" and Mrs. Ives tenderly removed the weeping girl from her son's bedside, confiding her to Laura's care, whilst with the aid of the nurse, whom she quickly summoned, she endeavoured to restore the unconscious man.

He had only fainted, from having overexerted his strength and the excitement due on his again seeing Inez; but fearing a more serious result on his revival, he was induced to say no more that day than to kiss the latter, and then once again compose himself to sleep.

And Inez waited, her life hanging on the balance which was trembling in the balance, her lips pale as his, her hands as icy cold, when,

having been assured that he was gently sleeping, she descended to where I was awaiting them in that cosy drawing-room.

" You must be very weary alone here?" Laura said, kindly, after having prevailed on the former to lie down on the sofa, " and you must think me worse than a barbarian not to have offered you any refreshment."

I assured her that I did not, and that I was not at all hungry, all the same that I was starving, having tasted nothing since we left London in the morning.

However, notwithstanding my protestations, she rang the bell, ordering that dinner should be served as quickly as possible, and a tray of cake and wine to be brought in immediately.

Inez, after having been persuaded to partake of something, was again comfortably ensconced amid the velvet cushions, eventually falling into a quiet sleep, whilst Laura and I conversed in an undertone, firstly concerning poor Dick, until our conversation drifted into another channel, the subject alone dealing with ourselves, Laura, for the time being, forgetting the brother tossing on his bed of sickness, and I the girl sobbing in her sleep on the couch, in our love for each other.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ANTHEM SIX.

NOTWITHSTANDING the order given by Laura, the servants at Hill House evidently did not intend putting themselves to any inconvenience by hurrying their operations in getting the dinner served before the usual hour, so it was nearly six o'clock before a neat parlour-maid appeared to inform us that it was on the table.

Inez still slept, and so gladly did I witness this relief to her feelings after the excitement through which she had recently passed that I would not consent to her being awake.

" You were quite right," Mrs. Ives said, on our telling her what we had done. " It may be the means of averting an illness, and I will give orders that she shall have something to tempt her to eat when she awakes."

The dinner passed off very quietly, each attempting for the sake of each to appear cheerful, whilst a cloud of gloom, as a pall, hung over all.

" Foolish boy," the former said, alluding to Dick, when we once again were alone, the servants having withdrawn after placing the dessert, " if he had only done at the first what he did in the end this trouble to all parties might have been saved; instead of which he gives me years in which a troubled conscience never gave me rest, and I fought a continued battle between my sense of right and my mother's love, almost wrecking the happiness of your sister's life. Of course, you know all about it?" she added.

I averred my ignorance, not caring to make them aware how I attained the knowledge of which I was really possessed, through the letter I had purloined, and being completely in the dark with respect to recent denouements; whilst Laura, who was evidently supposed to have enlightened me, blushed to the roots of her hair at the recollection of the other theme which had engrossed our attention, and Mrs. Ives was about to tell me, when a servant entered to request she would go to Mr. Dick's room, he having awoken.

" You had better see to your sister," she said, rising from the table. " He will, I am sure, be all anxiety to see her."

The drawing-room, on our entering, was just as I remembered it when, on a previous visit, Laura and I had pledged to each other our faith; the warm glow of the fire, for the days were still cold, threw a shade of comfort over it, and on the sofa, where we had left her, Inez still slept.

I stayed for a moment, thinking how beautiful she looked, the tresses of her golden hair having become unloosed fell in all their luxuriance on the ruby velvet in lovely contrast, whilst the deep, dark fringes of her

closed eyes rested on the marble pallor of her cheek.

" Is she not lovely?" asked Laura, who had advanced to where I stood, when a cinder falling on the steel hearth caused her to awake with a start.

" Is that you, Claude?" she asked, suddenly rising up. " What a long time I must have slept; it is quite dark."

" Yes, dear, you were over fatigued," said Laura, who moved gently towards her. " And now you must have something to eat," when, ringing the bell, she would take no denial to Inez partaking of the little *recherché* dinner she had ordered.

And the latter obeyed, a sad smile passing over her features, as Laura tempted her first with one delicacy, then with another.

" It would make Dick worse knowing you were making yourself ill," she said; " and, besides, you will want all your strength to nurse him back to health."

So after a while she was allowed once more to enter the sick chamber, where Dick lay anxiously awaiting her.

An improvement was visible on his awaking, and to his earnest entreaties Mrs. Ives had consented that Inez should come and sit with him, on condition he would not excite himself.

So, with the dim light of a shaded lamp, and the warm shadows thrown by the fire over wall and furniture, Inez sat by his bedside, her hand clasped in his, whilst her golden head reposed on the pillow beside his own, and she listened to the story which was to make their lives one.

Mrs. Ives had gone out, beckoning to the nurse to follow her example, and leave them alone—those two to whom a new life was opening—not wishing that another should witness the sanctity of that reunion.

For some time both remained silent—the recovered happiness too great for words, their hearts alone beating with tumultuous joy in the transcendent bliss of those happy moments.

" You do not doubt me now, darling?" said Dick, whilst his hand passed lovingly over her golden tresses.

" Is it true, then?" she asked, " really true, that I am, indeed, your—"

" Wife. Yes, my own, my darling wife," he returned before she had time to complete her sentence; and then he told her how, when a wild young fellow, he had met a young girl named Helena Wray; how, in those days he fancied he loved her, and, in a mad moment had married her, not awakening until too late to learn the mistake he had made.

She, a wild, wilful girl, possessed of extraordinary beauty, but of low parentage, had no sooner entered into a secret marriage, under the promise of its remaining so, than she declared her determination that the same should be made known to their respective friends.

" I tried by power of the love which she had avowed for me," continued Dick, " to dissuade her from her purpose, knowing full well the blow it would be to my mother, whilst I made home for her and myself as soon as I was able in a place where we could happily live together.

" At first she was furious, but at last consented, provided the tie between us should not be concealed from her parents. I consented, and having my own resources unfettered wholly at my own disposal, I took a small villa, in which I established my wife, it not being at too great a distance from the college.

" For a time I was happy, the girl in her passionate love holding me her complete slave, whilst her beauty enraptured my senses; but after a while I began to weary of her caresses—a beautiful creature without soul, and no power to hold me captive but the splendour of her form and the faultlessness of her features."

He waited for a few seconds, whilst Inez bid him sip from the glass she held to his lips, when his head again rested on the pillow, and he continued—

" Then came a fearful time for both. The small-pox was raging in the district, and

Helena fell a victim to the loathsome disease. For days the doctors gave no hopes of her recovery, and she even prayed for death, knowing in her agony of mind that with her beauty my love would die. But Heaven decreed otherwise—my poor girl lived; but oh! so changed—no trace left of her former self. And whilst I did not love I pitied, sorely pitied her; but she saw the change in me I endeavoured vainly to hide, and she became wild in her misery, threatening to take her own life, when she had no longer anything to live for.

" In her despair she left my home, returning to her own people; and on her reiterated refusal to return to me or my home I sold up the latter, and came here. After that I met you, Inez; and then, and not till then, I learnt the true lesson of love, and villain that I was, I induced you to leave your home with me as, I then thought, a married man."

A sob she vainly attempted to smother broke from Inez, but, quickly recovering herself, her hand closed round that of her companion.

" But Heaven was more tender in its mercy, Inez; for at the time I placed the ring on your finger before God's altar Helena was dead."

" Dead, and you did not know it, Dick?"

" No, love! Her people, thinking still to draw the quarterly money I had allowed her, kept her death a secret from me until last Christmas. When you fled from me, I determined to ascertain if she really lived. I had written to my mother some time previously, telling her how I regretted the part I had acted towards you and your innocence. Knowing from my agents that I was living abroad, Mrs. Wray, Helena's mother, was greatly astonished when I presented myself to her; and, after hazarding from her guilty manner that her daughter was no longer living, she at last, by dint of threats, confessed that she had died almost immediately on her return to them. And so, Inez, my darling, you were ever my true wife. Can you forgive me?" and he raised his eyes beseeching to hers.

But her only answer was a tender loving kiss on those fevered lips, and then the reunion of soul to soul.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW LIFE.

SPRING glided into summer, the soft Jane breezes entering at the open windows, and the roses hanging their pink-laced heads, whilst they filled the air with their fragrance, before Dick Ives was restored to his usual health.

For weeks, long weeks of agony and suspense to the watchers by his bedside, he lay hovering between life and death; in his delirium passing through the misery of those nine long years, until at length the crisis was past, the wearied brain found relief in a long, profound sleep, and he awoke to life.

I had returned to Ludham, leaving Inez behind, who could not be prevailed upon to quit her husband's side until with her he was able to travel so far.

After a consultation, respecting the purport of which we took Mrs. Ives into our confidence, we had decided not to enlighten my father further than to say that Dick and Inez were reunited, begging him, on account of the former's serious illness, not to tell him at present the sufferings to which his wife had been exposed during their estrangement.

A month had passed since I left Hill House, and with the French window wide open I and my father sat enjoying the soft summer air and the fragrant cigars—a box of which I had brought from London—whilst Little Claude, on the tiptoe of expectation, eagerly awaited the arrival of his parents, who were due about that time; and although I appeared to smoke as calmly as the old gentleman, I was in an equal state of excitement with the thoughts of meeting my darling.

But we hadn't to wait long, Claude rushing from the further gate, where he had gone to

watch, to tell us they were coming; and soon after a carriage drove up, and I almost fell in stepping outside as I hastily advanced to give them a welcome.

Dick was the first to alight, and, I am sorry to say, sufficiently ungallant as to leave the ladies to my tender mercies, while he clasped his boy to his bosom.

He was still pale from his recent illness, but with such a happiness beaming over his countenance as it did one good to look on.

"Papa, papa!" shouted the child, whilst he twined his arms around his father's neck, only releasing him to leap into those of Inez—Inez, grown so beautiful within those last few weeks—weeks in which she seemed to have recovered all the vivacity and happiness of her former youth, and then they all went into the house, my Laura leaning lovingly on me, while I whispered her of the bliss in store for us.

And on that evening, when we all assembled, my thoughts wandered back, and in my fancy I saw my twin sister as I saw her then, with the snowflakes falling around her slender form, and the sad, weary look in her beautiful eyes, until a soft hand on my shoulder aroused me from my reverie, and I turned round to see her beaming face smiling into mine.

"Shall we have some music, dear?" she asked, and on my assenting she moved to the piano, beginning the opening bars to a duet we had often sung together in the far past.

Laura sat by the window, whilst the growing shadows of twilight encircled us, and the lights from the cigars in which my father and Dick were indulging showed like tiny balls of fire in the darkness.

Then the music ceased, and a child's voice lisped a tiny prayer on his mother's knee, and the peace of Heaven surrounded us.

Laura's and my wedding was fixed for a fortnight hence, and during the interval we did not see much of the ladies, who were deeply engaged in the intricacies of lace and orange blossoms, mysterious boxes of every description arriving from London.

"And you do not fear you will regret your choice?" I asked, as the day drew near, and Laura and I were taking our customary walk in the soft moonlight.

"Why do you ask, Claude?" she answered. "You can never be less to me than now, darling."

"Heaven bless you, my sweet love!" I replied. "I would sacrifice my life rather than give you an hour's pain."

"The sun does not always shine in the brightest climes," she answered. "We cannot expect our lives to pass without a cloud; but Claude," she continued, "do you not think Dick should know now of the trouble through which Inez passed, for he seemed puzzled when little Claude told him the other day that he was found in the snow."

"I had hoped the child had forgotten all about it. Perhaps it would be better that there should be no secrets now."

And so on that night Inez knew from her husband's lips that he had been told all her sad story.

"And yet you forgave me?" he asked, drawing her closer to him.

"Through all I loved you, Dick, my husband!"

A few days later and the bells of Ludham Church rang out a merry peal. There was great excitement amongst the townsfolk, and little children dressed in white, holding baskets from which roses peeped through leaves of emerald green, were ranged each side of the gravel path leading to the sacred porch.

The sun shone out with a brilliant July heat, and again another and another peal sounded in the summer air when two carriages drove up, each with their white horses, and the coachmen decked with large white favours.

Then a loud hurrah and Heaven bless them rang from the assembled throng when the

bride, a veil of Honiton lace falling over her dark hair, stepped forth leaning on the arm of my father, followed by two little girls to act as bridesmaids, and a little fellow dressed as a tiny page holding her train of rich satin.

In the next carriage were Dick, Inez, and myself, for whom another cheer was given, and then for a time the bells ceased, to burst out again with renewed vigour when we emerged from the sacred edifice, my darling on my arm, with whom I stood on the threshold of a new life.

CONCLUSION.

TEN years have again sped their course, and once more I am seated with my chair drawn close to a huge fire, whilst the snow-flakes dance in the wintry air, and are blown up against the window pane; but I merely turn my head with a sense of comfort stealing over me, as I contrast the scene without with that of warmth within. I am master now of the old house, my father having joined the large majority five years since, and the voices of merry children now resound within its walls. Yes, and without too, for here come a troop of happy youngsters over the fresh strewn snow; and one tiny face, surrounded by a halo of golden hair, looks through the soft veiled panes on me, with those blue eyes of hers reminding me of other eyes so like, which came to me through that very window ten long years since; and as I rise to let her in, baby Inez throws her arms around me, pressing her icy-cold face to mine, whilst two young gentlemen in knickerbockers follow quickly on, their red hands laden with holly and mistletoe wherewith to decorate my sanctum.

Then the door on the other side opens, and a lady enters—a sweet, pale-faced matron with dark velvety eyes, which gleam with redundant happiness as they fall on the scene before her. She bears an open letter in her hand, which she had come with the intention of reading to me, but passes it instead into my hands with a loving smile, whilst she duly admires the scarlet berries and white, as the bundles are held up for her inspection, and her aid solicited in the task of ornamentation on the morrow.

"You will help us mamma, darling, won't you?" and Jack, o'er eldest boy, throws his arms around his mother's neck.

"Don't you think it better to wait until Uncle Dick and Cousin Claude come," she asked, which brings a pout for a second or two to the pretty lips of baby Inez; but when I read aloud from the letter that the latter is looking forward with pleasure to the aid he will give the children in their usual Christmas decorations to which he intended contributing a number of Chinese lanterns, happy smile plays over each youthful countenance at the prospect before them, for Cousin Claude, having attained the mature age of thirteen, always looks upon them as babies, and had even been heard on one occasion to designate them as kids.

And the next day came bright and clear, a brilliant sun shining over the white, unsoled snow, when three little noses are pressed against the window, intently and patiently awaiting the arrival of their manly cousin, and as a carriage is seen to approach a chorus of joyous voices and tramping feet arouse me to a sense that something unusual had taken place.

We look up at the sound—Laura and I—and then we know that Dick and Inez, not forgetting Claude, are within our walls, and we hasten to welcome them to our Christmas hearth.

Inez, still youthful in appearance, although she declares we are both old; a fact I cannot allow, notwithstanding my forty years and grey hair which, ill-natured people say, show themselves very conspicuously amid my raven locks, whilst my sister's golden tresses are silky and abundant as of yore.

"Mother hoped you would not think it un-

kind," I hear Dick telling my wife, "but she does not feel able now to travel as she says she did twenty years ago, and could not undertake the journey," so we had to make ourselves happy in the absence of grandmamma, who had not forgotten that the Santa Claus of her youth was equally in vogue with the youth of the present day; and a few hours later, when the children went to bed, little stockings were duly suspended, to be as duly filled by that generous-minded individual.

But the happy evening at last draws to an end. The voices of the choir, warbling a carol in the frosty night, holds us all wrapt in silence, recalling to my mind as it ever did the painful past, but my gloomy thoughts soon vanish, and the last notes die away, when looking at the same ormolu clock which has ticked incessantly during those long ten years.

Long ten years did I say? No, short as a summer's dream in the love and happiness they have brought me! But I must put aside those memories of mingled joy and misery, for looking I see it is on the stroke of twelve, and I know by bitter experience that Johnson (for he is with us still) will be in to the moment to open the window to Father Christmas at the appointed time, regardless of the cruel wind or the driving snow.

And here he is, punctual as of old. I can hear the jingle of glasses, and knowing I shall be called upon to do (the customaries) succumb to my fate, cheerful as any of that happy assembly, whilst I join in their Christmas greetings—whilst the ring of the crystal resounds through the room.

[THE END.]

THE ROMANCE OF THE NEEDLE.

—:-

The sun, setting in the glory of golden amber, flung its beams in a parting caress over the rippling blue waves of the Bay of Naples. Near the water's edge, all embowered in vines, was a tiny cottage, and in its low porch, before her spinning-wheel, sat Rosolyte, the daughter of Flavio, the vine-dresser.

As she turned her wheel she sang in a low voice dreamily to herself. Suddenly her song ceased, as from the cottage door issued the figure of her father. He was a very old man, and his features betokened thought and intelligence beyond his humble station. Just now he seemed greatly excited; for, as he came to his daughter's side his eyes flashed and his face worked convulsively.

"Father! what is it? what has happened?" she cried, in evident alarm.

To her question the old man answered nothing, but held out to her his hand, in which rested a small round object.

But the circular disc with what seemed to be a needle tremulously vibrating beneath its glass cover conveyed no meaning to Rosolyte's mind.

"Father, speak, and tell me the reason of your excitement. I do not see aught in this you show me to cause it."

The old man seated himself by his daughter's side, and began a long and earnest explanation; and as she listened the girl's mobile features lighted up with a fervour equal to his own. For then and there, in the humble vine-dresser's cottage, was explained for the first time the properties of that wonderful magnetic needle which has since been the guide of every mariner on the great deep.

"My daughter," said the old man at length, "I have laboured and thought long, and now success is near at hand; but my work is not done until someone high and powerful sees and understands its importance."

"Father!" exclaimed Rosolyte, "in three more weeks will be our *fête* day, and the king and queen will be in the city. Shall we not go and lay your discovery at their feet? I

have heard that they delight to honour all who, like themselves, love learning."

His daughter's proposition found favour with Flavio; and the time passed slowly on until the impatiently looked for morning dawned.

"Make yourself fair, my child," said Flavio, laying his aged hand proudly upon his daughter's head. "For who knows but that to-day may be the turning-point in your destiny? Some noble lord may see and love my Rosolyte."

The girl grew very pale as she said,—

"Father, you know that neither loving nor marrying are any more in my thoughts. You refused your consent to Paulo, and drove him from my side by your stern decision; and now I shall never see anyone else who will have the power to touch my heart."

"Rosolyte," Flavio said, "what I did was for the best. Paulo was but poor; and I fore-saw that in the future Flavio's daughter might be a bride for the richest and noblest. You will not repent having sacrificed your feelings to your duty as an obedient child."

Rosolyte did not reply, for at her father's words came vividly back the memory of her young lover's passionate, pleading tones as he besought her to leave all and come with him who loved her so well and truly.

Rosolyte's instinctive good taste taught her that her simple muslin dress would become her; and, attired in white, brightened only by a sash and belt of rose-hued ribbon, she started with her father on the way to the great city, where Flavio was to learn whether his ambitious dreams were to be realised, or whether as a poor vine-dresser he was to end his fast declining days.

As Rosolyte had said, it was *fête* day. Down the street, beneath the myriad waving banners, came the royal cavalcade. Foremost rode King Ferdinand, and by his side, on her snow-white palfrey, his lovely wife, Queen Jeanne.

Then followed the nobles, who had been honoured by being allowed to form the immediate escort of their sovereigns. Conspicuous among the glittering throng was one youth, taller and nobler than the others. As he passed the porch from beneath which Flavio and his daughter were gazing out upon the, to them, novel spectacle, his eyes suddenly rested upon Rosolyte. A crimson flush sprang to his very brow. In another moment he had passed, and Rosolyte had not seen him.

It was late in the day, and the time had arrived when the king received the petitions of his subjects. In the line awaiting their turn was Flavio, one trembling hand holding the case which contained his precious discovery, and the other resting upon his daughter's shoulder.

Suddenly a page, clad in royal colours, approached.

"Is your name Flavio?" he said. "If so, you and this maiden are to come with me."

Wonderingly, Flavio and Rosolyte followed their guide.

Quickly beat the heart of the village girl as she found herself in the presence of royalty; and with her eyes timidly veiled beneath their dark fringe, she stood while her father, in few but clearly expressed words, laid before his sovereign his invention.

As King Ferdinand listened interestedly, Queen Jeanne rose and beckoned to Rosolyte to come forward. Tremblingly she advanced, looking, in her simple robe in that gorgeous assemblage, like a pure white rosebud amid a setting of dazzling tropical exotics.

Queen Jeanne noticed her agitation, and, gently laying her hand upon her arm, she drew her close to her side and looked penetratingly into her face.

"Truly, our nephew has a good taste," she murmured softly to herself.

By this time Flavio had finished his explanation, and, with eyes whose light age had no power to dim, he was receiving his king's commendations and congratulations.

It was a proud moment. The success he had dreamed of was his.

Suddenly Queen Jeanne's soft voice interrupted her husband's words.

"My liege," she said, "have I your permission to carry out at this present and most opportune moment the intention of which I told you some time back?"

Then, as her husband signified his consent, she turned to Rosolyte.

"Sweet one," she said, "I have long known of you—of your beauty and great goodness—and had intended ere now to have summoned you to our presence; but hearing of your father's discovery, and that he intended to lay it before the king, have waited until now."

"Some time ago, while passing through the village in which you live, a young and favourite kinsman of ours saw and lost his heart to you. He told me of his passion and besought my help, which (for I love him as a mother) I promised.

"I now ask you, in the presence of ourselves and these witnesses, will you consent to be united in holy matrimony to our nephew, the young Lord D'Aubigny?"

Rosolyte had listened, almost uncomprehendingly, to the above startling words. Now she drew back, and the delicate colour excitement had brought faded from her face, as, in low, but resolute tones, she replied,—

"Pardon me, most gracious Queen, but I shall never marry!"

As he heard, Flavio started to her side, and, low in her ear, whispered,—

"My daughter, did I not promise you that this day would be the turning point in our lives? Do not now ruin all by your foolish clinging to the past. Accept this great good fortune which is laid before you."

But the maiden was firm.

"Your Majesty," she said, "I know of no noble lord whom I have ever seen; but there is one, and only one—a humble artist—who has my heart, even though I shall never meet him more; for he left me in anger, deeming me cold, because I refused to disobey my father's commands."

With an arch smile curving her lovely mouth, Queen Jeanne turned to a group of courtiers who stood in a distant corner of the audience-chamber.

"My Lord D'Aubigny, come near," she said.

Suddenly Rosolyte felt her hand clasped, and her eyes rested on a handsome, pleading face she well knew.

"Paulo!" she ejaculated.

"Yes, Rosolyte; can you forgive my deception? I wished to win my wife for love of myself alone, and I, the Lord D'Aubigny, am that Paulo—the humble artist—whom you sent away so coldly and cruelly. I was deeply angered at first; but I soon learned that it was only filial obedience which had caused your actions, and then I laid my desperate case before my aunt—our gracious queen—and in this romantic manner it has pleased her to fulfil her promise of assistance."

Thus, with the marriage in the full blaze of court glory, of the Lord D'Aubigny and Rosolyte, the daughter of Flavio, the discoverer of the magnetic needle, was completed a romance which, wherever the liquid Italian tongue is known, has been sung in ballads and told in prose and verse. C. B.

A LION DYING FROM GRIEF.—A pathetic incident occurred recently, at Paris, in connection with the death of Stewart, the lion-tamer. Stewart was in possession of an old and favourite lion, which was in the habit of living with him in his room, instead of being confined with the other beasts. The animal was discovered stretched lifeless across the dead body of his master, and as he was otherwise in a perfectly healthy condition, it is supposed that he died through sheer grief.

A LOST ANGEL.

It was in an old artist's studio that I saw the picture called "A Lost Angel." Near it hung a head which was catalogued "A Cherub."

In these two works the extremes of human expression were depicted. The larger, in fact, merited the name bestowed upon it. The smaller seemed too sweet for anything but heaven. A mother might have said: "Thus my child must look in Paradise;" but it was almost impossible to believe that such a divine creature actually existed on earth.

"Everyone says something like that," said the old artist whose work it was. "I saw that face in Florence, years ago. A mother and child sat together at the door of the little vine-wreathed stone house. The woman was sweet simplicity itself, the child far more beautiful than that attempt to reproduce its features. I felt that I should never again have so angelic a model, and advancing, requested the mother to allow me to sketch her child.

"'I will pay you well,' I said. 'Do you think you can persuade him to be quiet?'

"She gave me a bright smile of assent.

"'Yes,' she answered. 'Little Isidor shall pose for the Signor Artist. It is time he began. He must earn his bread as a model. It was his poor father's business before he died. He was said to be the handsomest model in Florence. They painted him for their lovers; and little Isidor resembles his father.'

"His mother, also," I said.

"She laughed, but answered in business-like fashion,—

"'Oh! I'm well enough; but they only engage me when they need peasant women. I am not fine like my poor husband; besides, youth is quick to go. Hold up your head, Isidor. Show the Signor Painter that you know how to pose.'

"The little Italian instantly threw himself into an exquisite attitude. His eyes uplifted, his carmine lips slightly apart, an ineffable sweetness in his eyes.

"Tell me, then, if I am right," he said, after a moment, and I nodded an affirmative. Instantly he seemed to have forgotten the world and to be listening to the harps of the angels. One might have fancied that he would vanish like a beautiful dream. He seemed too fair, too holy for earth. I painted him with rapture, but at my second sitting decided to make a larger portrait than I had at first intended. I presented my first sketch to his mother, who received it with delight, and fastened it to the wall on which a gilded crucifix and a print of the Virgin already hung, and I worked many days over my picture. When it was completed I paid my model's mother liberally, gave little Isidor a handful of small Italian coin that made him feel as rich as a king, and departed, sorry to turn my back on the quaint stone house, the kindly, handsome woman, and the beautiful boy.

"Wh-ever I carried my 'Cherub,' people exclaimed over the beauty of the face. I think no woman ever saw it without crying out upon the moment: 'What a lovely child!' I often thought of the boy. In all the years that followed I never forgot him. They were many, for I am an old man now. I was twenty-five when I left the little stone house, with the mother and her beautiful boy standing on the high steps under the shadow of a great vine that clung to the old wall. I was sixty when I saw it again—a man with his life behind him. I had achieved some fame; my name was well known, but I was no longer with all life's prizes to win.

"One or two graves lay across the path I had trodden; many disillusionments. I thought of the man who had painted little Isidor almost as of some other whom I had known and been fond of.

"I stood before the house where little Isidor had lived with his mother. It seemed unchanged. A vine grew over the door, spring-

ing, doubtless, from the same roots. The door was fast locked, and in any case it was foolish to fancy that those two dwelt there still. I walked away, and, wrapped in a reverie, stumbled over the toes of an old friend, who was a government official, and who seized me by the arm with a light Italian laugh.

"Well met," he said. "I thought of going to find you. There is something in the town which an artist like you must see. It will not be on exhibition long, for it is a fine specimen of the gaudy rascal, and he will be executed in a few days. He is a bandit—a murderer—everything that is horrible. He has cut off the ears and fingers of his prisoners and sent them to their friends, with intimations that if a certain ransom was not paid, this was only the beginning.

"He was captured at last on a visit to his sick mother, whom he seems to have been fond of. My dear fellow, I give you my word, he is the most hideous creature living. If you want a hideous villain for any of your fine pictures (here he gave me a complimentary Italian bow) there is his head for you. He would very much like to have you paint him he believes himself a hero. Come, I can admit you to the prison."

I went with him. The proper ceremonials were accomplished. As an artist, who wished to transfer this doomed Italian to canvas I was permitted to pass into his cell. He lay upon his cot asleep when we entered, but started up at our approach. The most fiendish countenance I had ever beheld was turned towards us. A wild, black beard hid the lower part of his face. His eyebrows, grown long and shaggy, flung a shadow over black eyes that glittered like black diamonds, and were immense and long-lashed; but in expression eyes of Satan. A great scar crossed his forehead; a deep seam lay upon his left cheek; his nose, straight as that of a Greek statue, had nostrils that, while finely cut, had an expression of contemptuous cruelty past all bearing; an expression that must have infuriated an enemy and horrified one who was in his power.

"Campani," said my conductor, "this is a gentleman—an artist who would like to sketch your head. He is a celebrated artist. Your face will be in all the great salons. You will pose for him—will you not?"

"I have a talent for that," said Campani, with the air of a monarch receiving ambassadors from a foreign court, "and shall rejoice to oblige the Signor Artist. I will look as terrible as possible. The signor, as an artist, will comprehend my motive. The signor will kindly not perpetuate the scars upon my face, which I do not wish handed down to posterity, as without them I am remarkably handsome."

Instantly he assumed an expression for which I have no words, and, with a word of thanks, I fell to work. As the head grew beneath my fingers I found that he was right. The scars and his expression alone made him hideous. His features were perfect. His hair glorious.

"I like it," he said, approvingly, pocketing the money I gave him. "Bring me some wine and some cigars, you there! I will drink the signor's health. No thanks. It is a pleasure to pose once more for a true artist."

"Great heavens!" said my friend, as he examined the picture in an outer room. "You have made a lost angel of our great brigand, Campani."

"I never added the scar. I felt that the brigand was right in his request, from an artistic point of view."

A few days afterwards he was executed. Florence was astir with the excitement, and the lottery people made a fortune from the losses of those who bought numbers which were supposed, I do not know why, to have become lucky because of the execution of a brigand. Terrible stories, that made the blood run cold, were told of him. He had had no mercy, no pity, no honour, no decency. But he seemed always to have been posing as

a terrible hero; to have done everything with a view to effect.

An improvisatore repeated the story of his life in the twilight streets, and women crossed themselves as they listened. A singer sung an impromptu song to his guitar, in which the murder of a lovely English lady by the cruel Campani was vividly portrayed. A man at a corner sold fragments of his garments as charms against bullets, and drove a thriving trade. The air was full of Campani. Leaving the crowd, I wandered away to the quiet portion of the city, where stood the little stone house where I had sketched the angelic Isidor. Usually peace lay upon it, and its old vine might have shadowed the cell of a hermit.

Now a crowd surrounded the door.

On its outskirts I saw my own servant, Antoine.

He bowed and spoke,—

"There is something the signor should see. It is the house of the mother of the brigand, Campani. There he was captured. Within is his portrait when a child. I give the signor my word that it is angelic."

"I will see it," I said.

I joined the crowd, and paid my bit of silver to a greedy old crone, who gathered the coin into her apron. Two candles burnt in sconces near the object of interest, and, as the peasant, who had been before me, crossed himself and retired, I saw, hanging beside a gilded crucifix over the head of the little bed, my own little sketch of the baby, Isidor.

"It is like him," said the old hag at the door. "That was my son, Isidor Campani, at the age of five. He was like that, only lovelier." A great signor painted it. His father was the handsomest man in Florence."

M. K. D.

FACETIE.

THE keynote of good breeding—B natural.

WHEN do one's teeth usurp the functions of the tongue?—When they are chattering.

If you think nobody cares for you in this cold world, just try to learn to play the trombone in a populous neighbourhood.

WHAT DOES HE WANT HIS COWS WASHED AND IRONED FOR?—A man lately advertised for a woman "to wash, iron, and milk one or two cows."

"It's a mighty mean man," says a local paper, "who wrote 'Pull down the blind.' He would probably be in favour of beating the cripples."

"BRIDGET, have you given the gold fish fresh water?" "No, ma'am. Sure, what's the use? They haven't drunk up what's in there yet."

"YOU won't catch me marrying a duck of a man," said a spirited girl; "because one of that kind is too apt to make a goose of a husband."

A WAS picked up a flower in a ball-room—most of the ladies had gone—and sang pathetically, "Tis the last rose of some her."

MISS ANGELICA: "I suppose you have been going out a great deal lately, Mr. M'Famish?"

Mr. M'Famish: "No, I have only been out to one dinner in two weeks." Miss Angelica:

"Dear me! You must be hungry!"

INGENIOUS COMPLIMENT.—A: "Mademoiselle, allow me to introduce to you my colleague, Dr. Muller, to whom I am indebted to the end of time for an act of kindness." Dr. Muller (after the introduction): "My dear sir, we are now quits."

WHEN Voltaire was writing his tragedy of *Merope*, he called up his servant one morning at three o'clock, and gave him some verses to carry immediately to the Sieur Paulin, who was to perform the tyrant. His man alleged that it was the hour of sleep, and that the actor might not like to be disturbed. "Go, I say," replied Voltaire; "tyrants never sleep."

ETHEL: "Mamma, I think Frank mean business." Mamma: "Why, what a way to talk, child? But tell me, what makes you think so?" Ethel: "He gave me a pair of sleeve-buttons last night, and they were linked."

"HERE," said the farmer, as he exhibited a broken jar to the manufacturer, "I packed this jar full of butter, and the jar split from top to bottom. Perhaps you can explain the phenomenon?" "Oh, yes, I can," was the ready reply; "the butter was stronger than the jar."

A BOY frequently took a walk with his father past a lunatic asylum, and finally asked: "Father, why don't we ever see any faces at the windows when we walk by the asylum?" "I do not know, my child," was the answer. "It may be because their heads are turned."

CLARA and May were having a splendid time picking the absent Matilda to pieces. Said May, after a momentary pause in their conversation:—"How happy I should be did I know that somebody was having as good a time talking about us as we are having talking about Tilly! There is nothing selfish about me, Carrie; I like to have others enjoy themselves."

HELPING HIS MASTER.—A gentleman was at dinner, and a servant boy, lately engaged, was handing him a tray of liquor in different sized glasses. Being in the middle of an anecdote to his neighbour, he mechanically held out his hand towards the tray; but, as people often do when they are thinking of something else, he did not take a glass. The boy thought he was hesitating which liquor he would have, and pointed to one particular glass, and whispered: "That's the biggest, sir."

MORE THAN THEIR SHARE.—"I see," said she, looking up from the paper, "that there were twenty million buttons made in this country last year." "Indeed?" he replied. "I wonder what they were made for?" "For sewing on garments, I suppose." "Well, somebody's got more than their share, for there hasn't been any sewed on my garments for a year." She resumed her reading, and a deep silence fell upon the household.

He was polite, but diffident, and he had got entangled in conversation with a couple of young ladies, and was struggling along as best he could. They were discussing the merits of different actresses. "Yes," he said, "Mrs. B. is certainly a very clever actress, but I—I think she is one of the plainest women I ever saw. That is," he added, politely, under the vague impression that some qualification should be introduced here, "I—er—mean, of course, present company always excepted."

"Yes, I'm in the lecture business," said the long-haired passenger, "and I'm making money, too. Big money. I've got a scheme, I have, and it works to a charm. And big houses wherever I go." "A scheme?" "Yes. I always advertise that my lectures are specially for women under thirty years of age, and for men who are out of debt. You just ought to see the way the people come trooping in."

"Some folks say I'm conceited," remarked young Popinjay the other day, "but I'm not. I don't believe in hiding what talent I've got under a bushel, that's all." "That's where you're right, young man," exclaimed a bystander, approvingly; "I wouldn't waste a bushel on it if I were you. A small-sized pint measure would be amply sufficient."

COLONEL PETERBY met Jim Webster a few days ago. Jim had recently married. "How do you like matrimony, Jim?" asked Colonel Peterby. He shook his head dubiously. "What's the matter?" "Yer see, hon, before we were married when I knocked at de dore she use ter say, 'Am dat you, honeysuckle?'" Now when I comes home she bawls out. 'Clean off dat hoofs before you comes in dat dore, you black moke.'"—*American Paper*.

SOCIETY.

The Queen has granted her patronage to the People's Palace for East London, and contributes £200 to the fund for completing the scheme.

It is said that the Duke of Marlborough is about to marry the widow of Mr. Charles Sartoris. This lady, besides being exceedingly handsome, possesses a fortune of £8,000 a year.

Prince and Princess Louis of Battenberg are expected to return to England shortly, and will take up their residence at Kensington Palace. The Prince is to be appointed to the command of a Royal yacht on the first vacancy.

Prince Francis of Teck, who is just sixteen, goes to Cheltenham College to be prepared for the army.

The Prince of Wales has given two hundred and fifty guineas to the fund now being raised for the unemployed. Considering that His Royal Highness has so many demands upon his purse at the present time, including the cost of his racing stud, it is as much as could be reasonably expected of him.

The Emperor William has given a donation of £25 towards the fund of the German Teachers' Association in England.

The German Crown Princess has promised to patronise a home for German maid-servants in Paris, which will shortly be opened in a house bought for the purpose at Batignolles.

The Earl of Onslow is resigning the Mastership of the Ripley and Knaphill Harriers, in consequence of the dearth of hares. This notification has been received with general regret. Mr. C. B. Shrubb, a former master, will most likely lead the pack.

The Infanta Eulalia of Spain has been suffering with diphtheria, and compelled to keep her bed; her marriage with Don Antonio is postponed until the Royal fiancée's complete recovery.

The Duke of Abercorn has been installed Grand Master of the Masonic Order in Ireland.

The Princess Christian took part in a free concert for the people, which was recently given, at the Albert Institute, Windsor, by the Windsor and Eton Madrigal Society. Her Royal Highness played some pianoforte duets, which consisted of a "Galop Militaire" by Mayer and the "Violette Polka" by J. Strauss, with Miss Liddell. The Princess performed as a solo a brilliant valz by Schumann. Many of the working classes were present, and warmly applauded her Royal Highness, who appears to have entirely recovered from her recent indisposition.

The King and Queen of Holland have entrusted the education of the young Crown Princess to an English governess.

The Prince of Wales, as President of the Health Exhibition, has presented to the British Museum the collection of 800 books in Chinese, being translations of European works into that language, which was exhibited by the Chinese Government at South Kensington last year.

Eleven bridesmaids attended Miss Leigh on the occasion of her marriage with Mr. Fennes Cornwallis. They were dressed in white Surah, trimmed with the new lace, with bands of the same inserted with narrow white ribbon, the drapery being caught up on one side with ostrich feathers; the same kind of feathers adorned the hair, with tulle veils. Each wore a diamond bangle, the bridegroom's gift. The bride's dress was of rich white silk, draped with point de gaze.

STATISTICS.

LARGE DECREASE IN LOSS OF LIFE AT SEA.—By a return just issued by the Board of Trade, the number of masters and seamen lost in vessels belonging to the United Kingdom by sea casualty is stated as follows: From sailing vessels for the years 1881-2 to 1884-5 (July to June), the numbers are 1,508, 1,146, 1,201, and 551 respectively, and from steamers 913, 779, 493, and 666 respectively, making a total for each year of 2,421, 1,925, 1,694, and 1,217. This return shows that shipowners were justified in contending that the bad weather of certain years operated largely in producing casualties at sea, and that loss of life is happily decreasing.

GEMS.

HEARKEN, therefore, to the voice of consideration; her words are the words of wisdom, and her paths shall lead thee to safety and truth.

The world moves along not merely by the gigantic shoves of its hero workers, but by the aggregate tiny pushes of every honest worker whatever. All men may give some tiny push or other, and feel they are doing something for mankind.

The spirit of liberty is not merely, as some people imagine, a jealousy of our own particular rights, but a respect for the rights of others and an unwillingness that any man, whether high or low, should be wronged and trampled under foot.

If you could once make up your mind, in the fear of God, never to undertake more work of any sort than you can carry on calmly, quietly, without hurry or flurry, and the instant you feel yourself growing nervous, and like one out of breath, would stop and take breath, you would find this common-sense rule doing for you what no prayers or tears could ever accomplish.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BAKED BEANS.—Soak a pint of beans overnight; in the morning boil till tender with a half-pound of salt pork; season with salt and pepper; remove to a baking-tin, and bake until brown.

POTATO CROQUETS are nice for supper, and are preferred by some people to the much-praised surprise potatoes. Take two cups of cold-mashed potatoes, two eggs, a lump of butter the size of an egg, salt and pepper to taste, and half a cupful of fine cracker crumbs. Mix well; roll with your hands on a kneading-board in round cakes or long ones; scatter a little flour on the board; drop the cakes in hot lard and fry until they are brown.

POTATO PANCAKES.—Potato pancakes, made of grated raw potato, are a light breakfast dish. Grate eight large potatoes, put to them one and a half teacupfuls of milk, a beaten egg or two, a lump of butter the size of a walnut, pepper, salt, and enough flour to make a batter. Add a heaped teaspoonful of baking-powder if only one egg is used. Drop from the spoon, and fry in butter or dripping to a rich brown.

SODA-CAKE FRITTERS.—Six or eight square (penny) sponge cakes, one cup cream, boiling hot, with a pinch of soda stirred in; four eggs, whipped light; one tablespoonful corn flour, wet up in cold milk; one-quarter pound carrots, washed and dried. Pound the cakes fine, and pour the cream over them. Stir in the corn flour. Cover for half-an-hour, then beat until cold. Add the yolks—light and strained—the whipped whites, then the carrots thickly dredged with flour. Beat all hard together. Drop in spoonfuls into the boiling lard; fry quickly; drain upon a warmed sieve, and send to table hot.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE noblest spirits are those which turn to heaven, not in the hour of sorrow, but in that of joy.

SIMPLE emotion will not suffice to elevate the character or improve the life. There must be strength of will, power of self-denial; persevering effort.

An English physician who lived two years in Great Namaqua Land, South Africa, which abounds in venomous serpents, gives a curious account of the methods which the natives employ for the treatment of snake bites. In many cases, after being bitten, they swallow some of the poison extracted from the fangs of the snake. In others, they apply to the wound bits of the dried body of a poisonous lizard which is found in the country. The snakes of Namaqua Land whose bite is most likely to prove fatal are puff adders, night adders, horn snakes, and yellow cobras. They kill many horses and cattle.

BALL DRESSES AND FIRE.—An admirable suggestion is made in the *Lancet* in regard to the protection of ball-dresses against the liability to take fire by accident. It seems that if twenty-five per cent. of tungstate of soda is added to the starch applied to the fabric, the solution will render the material non-inflammable. If it is not desired to starch the garment, it may simply be dipped in a solution of tungstate of soda alone, and allowed to dry. Neither of these methods of treatment harms the cloth, or its colour, however delicate.

The Prince of Wales has strongly desired that the various kinds of Australian fish might be added to the Aquarium which is to be exhibited at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition, soon to be held. It has been determined that the cost would be so great that the project has been given up, and, instead, there are to be exhibited nearly one hundred water-colour sketches of the fishes indigenous to the colony. They will be prepared by an artist skilled in drawing animals.

EVIDENCE OF THE DECAY OF THE FORESTS OF AUSTRALIA is found in the existence of a few large trees, at the present day, which far exceed in magnitude any of those about them. They are supposed to be the survivors of a race of giants mostly perished. A tree, twenty-five feet in circumference, at a height of thirty feet above the ground, was described, not very long since, at a meeting of the Royal Society of New South Wales.

MANAGEMENT OF LITTLE ONES.—Never snub a little one. In some households the youngsters are scarcely permitted to speak above their breath. This is all wrong. In the family parlour, as in the commonwealth, there should be freedom of speech. Children should be encouraged to express, in a modest way, their opinions before their parents, and to come to them for advice and counsel in all their difficulties and dilemmas. If this course is pursued, they will not be likely to take any serious steps in after-life without either consulting the old folk at home or applying the home standard of propriety and prudence to whatever enterprise they may have in view.

ADVICE TO GIRLS.—Dear girls, do not let mamma do for you what you can do for yourselves. How many are there of you who "have not thought" that mamma is robbing herself of many little spaces of rest; that she is straining the nerves and the eyes that need quiet; that she is depriving herself of the refreshing walk or the new magazine; that she is slowly, quietly, but surely drifting away from you into her grave, as the only place of refuge from too many trifles that are growing into a heavy load? There is the rent in the gown, the button from the shoe, the rip in the glove, the score of trifles that will accumulate; look for them! Give the experiment a trial, and we promise you that your lives will be far happier.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. W. M.—Handwriting exceedingly clerky.

CAROLINE L. M.—Light lock of hair chestnut-brown; the other, deep black.

JENNIE.—The lock of hair enclosed is golden-shaded brown. We are much gratified by your highly complimentary letter.

G. W.—Elizabeth is from the Hebrew, and signifies, "The oath of God," or "God hath sworn." Jane is from the same tongue, and signifies, "The grace of the Lord."

C. W.—Handwriting ladylike. If you have an objection to borax and camphor as a wash for the hair, use clean cold water; dry the hair thoroughly after.

GERTRAUDE.—In the language of flowers a rose means, "I love you;" mignonette, "your qualities surpass your charms;" periwinkle, "I vow eternal friendship;" oleander, "beauty;" ivy, "fidelity in friendship;" convolvulus, "inconstancy;" oak, "love of your country;" yellow rose, "unfaithful."

F.—A chemist will supply you. Lime-water is easily made by dissolving a small lump of lime in a pint of water. The meaning of saturation is when the solvent refuses to take up any more, which you will ascertain by the powder remaining at the bottom in place of dissolving in the spirit.

C. S.—1. An engraved ring should be worn on the third finger of the right hand. It is etiquette for a lady to bow to a gentleman in the street (should she feel so disposed), after introduction at a ball. 2. Grease spots may be removed from your dress by the following mixture, viz.: one ounce of essence of lemon and three ounces of spirits of turpentine; keep in a phial for use when required.

W. H. C.—The chemical name for chalk is carbonate of lime. Lime is simply the oxide of calcium; its metallic basis was discovered by Sir Humphrey Davy: it absorbs largely carbonic-acid gas when exposed to the atmosphere, and thus becomes carbonate of lime. It exists in all rivers and springs, and in all soils, and one-eighth of the crust of the earth is constructed with it; marble, limestone, marls in all their varieties are chiefly composed of it.

LOTTIE.—As you have good reason to fear your relative's intentions respecting the property, you had better secure yourself by placing the matter in the hands of a respectable lawyer, either to dispose of your shares or to ensure your possession of the house. You need entertain no apprehension about the papers and deeds, they will be perfectly safe in the lawyer's custody. We see no grounds for disputing your father's will; it appears to be a perfectly valid instrument, but we cannot advise you better than to save yourself future anxiety by having the question legally settled, and your own rights secured.

A FORESTER.—A sound education, though essential to a cultivated mind, does not alone constitute one; the judgment must be brought to bear upon every subject under consideration. Refinement of taste and comprehensive information on prevailing topics are to be acquired; good books, good society, and good conversation, and that confidence which the possession of accomplishments begets will give the mind a healthy tone. There is no impropriety in your accepting the music offered by your gentleman friend; if he is accustomed to hear you sing or play, the gift of the music may be merely a compliment dictated by courtesy, and should be considered as such by you.

A. D.—1. Copper was one of the first metals known to man, and was in use before iron. The ancient Egyptians cut their hard granite monuments with copper chisels, which they are supposed to have known how to harden, in some way now forgotten. Almost all the ancient nations used copper largely in making statues, household ornaments and articles of use, weapons of war, coins, &c. The only work likely to meet your expectations is "Röber's Ancient Art." It has over three hundred illustrations and a glossary of technical terms.

G. M. S.—As you have a little taste for writing, we would advise you to cultivate it. Your earnings may be small at first, but by jottings down your thoughts as they occur to you, and afterwards writing out and revising them, you may acquire a facility in composition that will render literary work agreeable and profitable. Again, if you have a taste for painting, cultivate that also. These two pursuits would certainly enable you to be self-supporting.

C. H. N.—"Tamm O'Shanter" the title of a poem by Burns, and the name of its hero, was a farmer, who, riding home very late, and very much intoxicated, from Ayr, had to pass by the Kirk of Alloway, the reputed haunt of witches and fiends. Emboldened by the stuff he had drunk, he looked in and saw the inmates dancing merrily to the music of the bag-pipe. Carried away by the excitement of the moment he involuntarily cried out to the most "winsome weach" of all, "Weel done, Cutty Sark! Weel done!" In a moment "all was dark," and Tam was spurring his "grey mare Meg" to the height of her speed; in other words, seeking safety in flight, Cutty Sark close to the horse's hoofs. Tam thought if he could reach the middle of the bridge over the River Doon he would be safe, for it was the current belief that witches had no power to pass beyond the middle of a stream. This he himself accomplished, but his horse's tail was clutched by the leading witch and dragged off, that appendage not having passed the magic line.

K. V.—Any respectable herbalist will supply you with a remedy.

G. F. W.—We will make inquiries and let you know the result.

C. R.—The name Stephen signifies a "crown;" Mary, "bitterness."

MUNNIE.—A servant addressing her mistress by letter may use either madam or honoured madam; the latter, perhaps, being more respectful. You can gain the information respecting the mails at any local post-office.

C. E. F.—We cannot very well enter upon, in this page, a description of a flirt; but, taking your own account as a true one, you do not appear to come under the category. If you will be more explicit when next you write, we may be more minute in giving our opinion. You are not a very bad writer, rather the reverse.

EKKA.—The falling off of hair may be only temporary, requiring perhaps from illness or mental application; the following is a powerful lotion which you may apply every morning for a week or so, and then await the result: Take a handful of the stems and leaves of the common box to be found in most gardens, immerse in nearly a pint of water and boil for fifteen minutes in a closely-covered vessel; let it stand in a covered jar for a day, then strain, and add half-an-ounce of lavender water.

LINA.—The colours of flannels may be best preserved from running by washing the articles, as quickly as possible, in lukewarm water; using plenty of soap, then rinsing immediately in clean water, lukewarm, and hanging out to dry. The chief point is to manage the process without a moment's loss of time, wringing but slightly; the sooner, too, the drying is accomplished the better. Rust may be removed from needles by means of a sand-cushion.

"WITH YOU, MY LOVE, WITH YOU."

Ah, sweet the life I might have spent,
In satisfaction and content,
In heaven's own peaceful element,
With you, my love, with you.

How charming would have been the days,
How fresh and fragrant all life's ways,
When wandering through its tangled maze
With you, my love, with you.

But when I'm wak'ing, or asleep,
Upon the land or on the deep,
Blest intercourse I seem to keep
With you, my love, with you.

I feel your spirit's presence near,
To warm, to comfort, and to cheer;
And bright angelos once appear
With you, my love, with you.

Some day this loneliness will end:
Death will restore to me my friend;
And all eternity I'll spend
With you, my love, with you.

J. P.

DAISY F.—Practice on the piano four hours a day if you wish to learn quickly; incessant practice is required before you can acquire perfect freedom of "fingering." It is by hurrying over their tuition that many young ladies, who consider themselves proficient, convert the melody of the pianoforte into the humdrum clangor of a barrel-organ.

L. S. H.—The loss of the front teeth is a serious matter, but you must take heart of grace and apply to a dentist, who will doubtless supply the deficiency and answer all questions upon the subject. You must not forget, independently of the appearance, which seems to affect you chiefly, that the teeth are required for masticating purposes, and when they drop out must be replaced if you wish to derive due benefit from your food.

C. L. W.—In the conflict of laws on the subject of marriage, it has been well settled that the law or custom of the country governs. If a marriage is valid by the law of the country where it is celebrated it is recognized as valid everywhere. "This law," says Story, "has received the most deliberate sanction of the English and American courts and of foreign jurists." The most prominent, if not the only known objections, the same American jurist considers to be marriages involving the very near consanguinity of the parties; marriages forbidden by the public law of a country through motives of policy, and marriages celebrated in a foreign country under circumstances which impose on the parties the law of their own country.

F. R. D.—1. To render the colours of cotton fabrics permanent, dissolve three gills of salt in four quarts of water. Put the calico in while hot, and leave it until cold. 2. To restore creased ribbons, lay them evenly on a board, and with a very clean sponge damp them evenly all over. Then roll them smoothly and tightly on a ribbon block of greater breadth than the ribbon, and let them remain until dry. Afterwards transfer them to a clean dry block. Next wrap in brown paper, and keep them until wanted. 3. To remove water stains from engravings, fill a sufficiently large clean vessel with pure water. Dip the engraving in, waving it backwards and forwards until wet through. Then fasten it to a flat board with drawing pins, and let it dry in the sun.

T. N. A.—You are decidedly wrong; the word should be pronounced as if spelt "varie," not vowels; a good deal of prejudice exists respecting this. It is the same with the word twopence, degenerated to tuppence. Speak plainly; it is as easy and more graceful.

d. L. L.—The name Lucy is the feminine of Lucius, and signifies shining; Ruth is Hebrew, and means trembling; Psyche, pronounced Sy-kee, is Greek, and signifies the soul.

C. H. H.—We regret we have not so good an opinion as yourself and friends of the stanzas that have been admired so much. Neither the poem nor the copyright is of the slightest use to us.

MARY MAY.—The best thing we can recommend for an offensive breath is the following: Pour six or eight drops of the concentrated solution of chloride of soda into a glass of pure water, and take in the morning before breakfast.

M. S. S.—Handwriting fair, but will repay more practice: there is nothing like continued practice for perfecting the handwriting; procure the best copy you can meet with, and imitate till you can equal it. The colour of the hair is rich brown. Now to the historical part of your letter. After the invasion of the Picts and Scots, A.D. 380, the Roman forces were gradually withdrawn from Britain after a sway of nearly four centuries.

L. V. W.—"Fidel Defensor" (Defender of the Faith) was the title conferred on Henry VIII. by Pope Leo X., because the King wrote a tract against Luther, who was then heading the Protestant movement. The title is still retained by our sovereign, though the faith they now defend is the very one against which Henry issued the manifesto that gained him the distinction.

AMY R.—The invention of golden and silver coins is ascribed to the Lydians; the most ancient coins are Macedonian of the fifth century. Homer speaks of brass money as existing 1184 years before Christ. Iron money was used in Sparta, and iron and tin in Britain. Various exchanges in place of coins have been used, the most general being pieces of precious metal. The Hindoo of the present day have a currency of cowries, which are small shells; beads and shells were the barter of many races of savages. The Hollanders used pasteboard pieces so late as 1574.

MISS Y.—It is not usual for a lady to put her address on her visiting card. Wedding cards should be simple; plain silver-edged ones are very tasteful; they should be sent out a week or so before the return from the honeymoon. On sending your card after a party, you should merely enclose it in an addressed envelope; if you make a seal turn the corner down. 2. Playing-cards are said to have been invented to please Charles VII. of France while ill. The kings and queens represent heroes and heroines of history, the knaves servants of the kings and queens, the colours the two main divisions of the year, the number of each suit the week in a year, and the number of cards the weeks in a year.

HOUSEWIFE.—To make patent yeast: boil six ounces of hops in three gallons of water three hours; strain it off, and let it stand ten minutes; then add half a peck of ground malt, stir it well up, and cover it over; return the hops, and put the same quantity of water to them again, boiling them the same time as before, straining it off to the first mash; stir it up, and set it to work at ninety degrees, with three pints of patent yeast; let it stand about twenty-four hours; take the scum off the top, and strain it through a hair sieve; it will be then fit for use. One pint is sufficient to make a bushel of bread.

C. M. W.—It is stated that the term Whig was a name of reproach given by the Court party to their antagonists on the discovery of the "Meat-Fab Plot" in 1678. Two parties being then formed, those who believed in the plot were called Whigs; the others, Tories. In time these names became distinctive of opposing politicians. The Tories are now called Conservatives; the Whigs, Liberals. The Tories vindicated the divine right of kings; the Whigs supported civil and religious liberty. Some aver that the terms of Cavalier and Roundhead were changed to those of Tory and Whig. The derivation of Tory is from an Irish word signifying a savage extorter. Blue was the colour of the Scotch Covenanters in the 16th century; orange and yellow were adopted by the Whigs after the revolution of 1688.

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